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HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

H. A. TAINE,
D.C.L.

TRANSLATED BY H. VAN LAUN.

FOURTH EDITION.

VOL. II.

EDINBURGH:
EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS.
1873.

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HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BOOK III.

THE CLASSIC AGE.

CHAPTER II.

Dryden.

I. Dryden's beginnings—Close of the poetic age—Cause of literary decline and regeneration.

II. Family—Education—Studies—Reading—Habits—Position—Character—Audience—Friendships—Quarrels—Harmony of his life and talent.

III. The theatres re-opened and transformed—The new public and the new taste—Dramatic theories of Dryden—His judgment of the old English theatre—His judgment of the new French theatre—Composite works—Incongruities of his drama—*Tyrannic Love*—Grossness of his characters—*The Indian Emperor, Aureng-zebe, Almanzor.*

IV. Style of his drama—Rhymed verse—Flowery diction—Pedantic tirades—Want of agreement between the classical style and romantic events—How Dryden borrows and mars the inventions of Shakspeare and Milton—Why this drama fell to the ground.

V. Merits of this drama—Characters of Antony and Don Sebastian—Otway—Life—Works.

VI. Dryden as a writer—Kind, scope, and limits of his mind—Clumsiness in flattery and obscenity—Heaviness in dissertation and discussion—Vigour and fundamental uprightness.

VII. How literature in England is occupied with politics and religion—Political poems of Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel, The Medal*—Religious poems, *Religio Laici, The Hind and the Panther*—Bitterness and virulence of these poems—*Mac Flecknoe.*

VIII. Rise of the art of writing—Difference between the stamp of mind of the artistic and classic ages—Dryden's manner of writing—Sustained and oratorical diction.

IX. Lack of general ideas in this age and this stamp of mind—Dryden's translations—Adaptations—Imitations—Tales and letters—Faults—Merits—

Gravity of his character, brilliancy of his inspiration, fits and starts of poetic eloquence—*Alexander's Feast*, a song in honour of S. Cecilia's Day.

X. Dryden's latter days—Wretchedness—Poverty—Wherein his work is incomplete—Death.

COMEDY has led us a long way; we must return and consider other kind of writings. A higher spirit moves amidst the great current. In the history of this talent we shall find the history of the English classical spirit, its structure, its gaps and its powers, its formation and its development.

I.

The subject is a young man, Lord Hastings, who died of smallpox at the age of nineteen:

'His body was an orb, his sublime soul
Did move on virtue's and on learning's pole;
. . . Come, learned Ptolemy, and trial make
If thou this hero's altitude canst take.

. . . Blisters with pride swell'd, which through 's flesh did sprout
Like rose-buds, stuck i' the lily skin about.
Each little pimple had a tear in it,
To wail the fault its rising did commit. . . .

Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,
The cabinet of a richer soul within?
No comet need foretel his change drew on
Whose corpse might seem a constellation.'[1]

With such a fine specimen, Dryden, the greatest poet of the classical age, made his appearance.

Such enormities indicate the close of a literary age. Excess of folly in poetry, like excess of injustice in political matters, lead up to and foretell revolutions. The Renaissance, unchecked and original, abandoned the minds of men to the fire and caprices of imagination, the oddities, curiosities, outbreaks of an inspiration which cares only to content itself, breaks out into singularities, has need of novelties, and loves audacity and extravagance, as reason loves justice and truth. After the extinction of genius folly remained; after the removal of inspiration nothing was left but absurdity. Formerly the internal disorder and dash produced and excused *concetti* and wild flights; thenceforth men threw them out in cold blood, by calculation and without excuse. Formerly they expressed the state of the mind, now they belie it. So are literary revolutions accomplished. The form, no longer original or spontaneous, but imitated and passed from hand to hand, outlives the old spirit which had created it,

[1] Dryden's *Works*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, 2d ed., 18 vols., 1821, xi. 94.

and is in opposition to the new spirit which destroys it. This preliminary strife and progressive transformation make up the life of Dryden, and account for his impotence and his falls, his talent and his success.

II.

Dryden's beginnings are in striking contrast with those of the poets of the Renaissance, actors, vagabonds, soldiers, who were tossed about from the first in all the contrasts and miseries of active life. He was born in 1631, of a good family; his grandfather and uncle were baronets; Sir Gilbert Pickering, his relative, was a knight, member of Parliament, one of Cromwell's council of twenty-one, one of the great office-holders of the new court. Dryden was brought up in an excellent school, under Dr. Busby, then in high repute; after which he passed four years at Cambridge. Having inherited by his father's death a small estate, he used his liberty and fortune only to maintain him in his studious life, and continued in seclusion at the University for three years more. Here you see the regular habits of an honourable and well-to-do family, the discipline of a connected and solid education, the taste for classical and exact studies. Such circumstances announce and prepare, not an artist, but a man of letters.

I find the same inclination and the same signs in the remainder of his life, private or public. He regularly spends his mornings in writing or reading, then dines with his family. His reading was that of a man of culture and a critical mind, who does not think of amusing or exciting himself, but who learns and judges. Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius were his favourite authors; he translated several; their names were always on his pen; he discusses their opinions and their merits, feeding himself on this reasoning which oratorical customs had imprinted on all the works of the Roman mind. He is familiar with the new French literature, the heir of the Latin, with Corneille and Racine, Boileau, Rapin and Bossu;[1] he reasons with them, often in their spirit, writes reflectively, seldom fails to arrange some good theory to justify each of his new works. He knew very well the literature of his own country, though sometimes not very accurately, gave to authors their due rank, classified the different kinds of writing, went back as far as old Chaucer, whom he transcribed and put into a modern dress. His mind thus filled, he would go in the afternoon to Will's coffeehouse, the great literary rendezvous: young poets, students fresh from the University, literary dilettante crowded round his chair, carefully placed in summer near the balcony,

[1] Rapin (1621–1687), a French Jesuit, a modern Latin poet and literary critic. Bossu, or properly Lebossu (1631–1680), wrote a *Traité du Poème épique*, which had a great success in its day. Both critics are now completely forgotten. —Tr.

in winter by the fireside, thinking themselves fortunate to get in a word, or a pinch of snuff respectfully extracted from his learned snuff-box. For indeed he was the monarch of taste and the umpire of letters; he criticised novelties—Racine's last tragedy, Blackmore's heavy epic, Swift's first poems; slightly vain, praising his own writings, to the extent of saying that 'no one had ever composed or will ever compose a finer ode' than his on Alexander's Feast; but gossipy, fond of that interchange of ideas which discussion never fails to produce, capable of enduring contradiction, and admitting his adversary to be in the right. These manners show that literature had become a matter of study rather than of inspiration, an employment for the taste rather than for the enthusiasm, a source of distraction rather than of emotion.

His audience, his friendships, his actions, his strifes, had the same tendency. He lived amongst great men and courtiers, in a society of artificial manners and measured language. He had married the daughter of Thomas Earl of Berkshire; he was historiographer, then poet-laureate. He often saw the king and the princes. He dedicated each of his works to some lord, in a laudatory, flunkeyish preface, bearing witness to his intimate acquaintance with the great. He received a purse of gold for each dedication, went to return thanks; introduces some of these lords under pseudonyms in his *Essay on the Dramatic Art;* wrote introductions for the works of others, called them Mæcenas, Tibullus, or Pollio; discussed with them literary works and opinions. The re-establishment of the court had brought back the art of conversation, vanity, the necessity for appearing to be a man of letters and of possessing good taste, all the company-manners which are the source of classical literature, and which teach men the art of speaking well.[1] On the other hand, literature, brought under the influence of society, entered into society's interests, and first of all in petty private quarrels. Whilst men of letters learned etiquette, courtiers learned how to write. They soon became jumbled together, and naturally fell to blows. The Duke of Buckingham wrote a parody on Dryden, *The Rehearsal*, and took infinite pains to teach the chief actor Dryden's tone and gestures. Later, Rochester took up the cudgels against the poet, supported Settle against him, and hired a band of ruffians to beat him. Besides this, Dryden had quarrels with Shadwell and a crowd of others, and finally with Blackmore and Jeremy Collier. To crown all, he entered into the strife of political parties and religious sects, fought for the Tories and Anglicans, then for the Roman Catholics; wrote *The Medal, Absalom and Achitophel*, against the Whigs; *Religio Laici* against Dissenters and Papists; then *The Hind and Panther* for James II., with the logic of controversy and the bitterness of party. It is a long way from this

[1] In his *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 226, Dryden says: 'Now, if they ask me, whence it is that our conversation is so much refined? I must freely, and without flattery, ascribe it to the court.'

combative and argumentative existence to the reveries and seclusion of the true poet. Such circumstances teach the art of writing clearly and soundly, methodical and connected discussion, strong and exact style, banter and refutation, eloquence and satire: these gifts are necessary to make a man of letters heard or believed, and the mind enters compulsorily upon a track when it is the only one that can conduct it to its goal. Dryden entered upon it spontaneously. In his second production,[1] the abundance of well-ordered ideas, the oratorical energy and harmony, the simplicity, the gravity, the heroic and Roman spirit, announce a classic genius, the relative not of Shakspeare, but of Corneille, capable not of dramas. but of discussions.

III.

And yet, at first, he devoted himself to the drama: he wrote twenty-seven pieces, and signed an agreement with the actors of the King's Theatre to supply them with three every year. The theatre, forbidden under the Commonwealth, had just re-opened with extraordinary magnificence and success. The rich scenes made moveable, the women's parts no longer played by boys, but by women, the novel and splendid wax-lights, the machinery, the recent popularity of actors who had become heroes of fashion, the scandalous importance of the actresses, who were mistresses of the aristocracy and of the king, the example of the court and the imitation of France, drew spectators in crowds. The thirst for pleasure, long repressed, knew no bounds. Men indemnified themselves for the long abstinence imposed by fanatical Puritans; eyes and ear, disgusted with gloomy faces, nasal pronunciation, official ejaculations on sin and damnation, satiated themselves with sweet singing, sparkling dress, the seduction of voluptuous dances. They wished to enjoy life, and that in a new fashion; for a new world, that of the courtiers and the idle, had been formed. The abolition of feudal tenures, the vast increase of commerce and wealth, the concourse of landed proprietors, who let their lands and came to London to enjoy the pleasures of the town and to court the favours of the king, had installed on the summit of society, in England as in France, rank, authority, the manners and tastes of the world of fashion, of the idle, the drawing-room frequenters, lovers of pleasure, conversation, wit, and breeding, occupied with the piece in vogue, less to amuse themselves than to criticise it. Thus was Dryden's drama built up; the poet, greedy of glory and pressed for money, found here both money and glory, and was half an innovator, with a large reinforcement of theories and prefaces, diverging from the old English drama, approaching the new French tragedy, attempting a compromise between classical eloquence and romantic truth, accommodating himself as well as he could to the new public, which paid and applauded him.

---

[1] *Heroic stanzas to the memory of Oliver Cromwell.*

'The language, wit, and conversation of our age, are improved and refined above the last. . . . Let us consider in what the refinement of a language principally consists; that is, "either in rejecting such old words, or phrases, which are ill-sounding or improper; or in admitting new, which are more proper, more sounding, and more significant." . . . Let any man, who understands English, read diligently the works of Shakspeare and Fletcher, and I dare undertake, that he will find in every page either some solecism of speech, or some notorious flaw in sense. . . . Many of (their plots) were made up of some ridiculous incoherent story, which in one play many times took up the business of an age. I suppose I need not name *Pericles Prince of Tyre*, nor the historical plays of Shakspeare; besides many of the rest, as the *Winter's Tale*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Measure for Measure*, which were either grounded on impossibilities, or at least so meanly written, that the comedy neither caused your mirth, nor the serious part your concernment. . . . I could easily demonstrate, that our admired Fletcher neither understood correct plotting, nor that which they call the decorum of the stage. . . . The reader will see Philaster wounding his mistress, and afterwards his boy, to save himself. . . . His shepherd falls twice into the former indecency of wounding women.'[1]

Fletcher nowhere permits kings to retain the royal dignity. Moreover, the action of these authors' plays is always barbarous. They introduce battles on the stage; they transport the scene in a moment to a distance of twenty years or five hundred leagues, and a score of times consecutively in one act; they jumble together three or four different actions, especially in the historical dramas. But they sin most in style. Dryden says of Shakspeare:

'Many of his words, and more of his phrases, are scarce intelligible. And of those which we understand, some are ungrammatical, others coarse; and his whole style is so pestered with figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.'[2]

Ben Jonson himself often has bad plots, redundancies, barbarisms:

'Well-placing of words, for the sweetness of pronunciation, was not known till Mr. Waller introduced it.'[3]

All, in short, descend to quibbles, low and common expressions:

'In the age wherein those poets lived, there was less of gallantry than in ours. . . . Besides the want of education and learning, they wanted the benefit of converse. Gentlemen will now be entertained with the follies of each other; and, though they allow Cob and Tibb to speak properly, yet they are not much pleased with their tankard, or with their rags.'[4]

For these gentlemen we must now write, and especially for 'reasonable men;' for it is not enough to have wit or to love tragedy, in order to be a good critic: we must possess a solid knowledge and a lofty reason, know Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, and pronounce judgment according to their rules.[5] These rules, based upon observation and logic, prescribe unity of action; that this action should have a beginning, middle, and end;

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[1] *Defence of the Epilogue of the Second Part of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 213.
[2] Preface to *Troilus and Cressida*, vi. 239.
[3] *Defence of the Epilogue of the Conquest of Granada*, iv. 219.
[4] *Ibid.* 225. Preface to *All for Love*, v. 306.

that its parts should proceed naturally one from the other; that it should excite terror and pity, so as to inform and improve us; that the characters should be distinct, harmonious, conformable with tradition or the design of the poet. Such, says Dryden, will be the new tragedy, closely allied, it seems, to the French, especially as he quotes Bossu and Rapin, as if he took them for instructors.

Yet it differs from it, and Dryden enumerates all that an English pit can blame in the French stage. He says:

'The beauties of the French poesy are the beauties of a statue, but not of a man, because not animated with the soul of poesy, which is imitation of humour and passions. . . . He who will look upon their plays which have been written till these last ten years, or thereabouts, will find it an hard matter to pick out two or three passable humours amongst them. Corneille himself, their arch-poet, what has he produced except the *Liar?* and you know how it was cried up in France; but when it came upon the English stage, though well translated, . . . the most favourable to it would not put it in competition with many of Fletcher's or Ben Jonson's. . . . Their verses are to me the coldest I have ever read, . . . their speeches being so many declamations. When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richelieu, those long harangues were introduced, to comply with the gravity of a churchman. Look upon the *Cinna* and the *Pompey;* they are not so properly to be called plays as long discourses of reasons of state; and *Polieucte,* in matters of religion is as solemn as the long stops upon our organs. Since that time it is grown into a custom, and their actors speak by the hour-glass, like our parsons. . . . I deny not but this may suit well enough with the French; for as we, who are a more sullen people, come to be diverted at our plays, so they, who are of an airy and gay temper, come thither to make themselves more serious.'[1]

As for the tumults and combats which they relegate behind the scenes, 'nature has so formed our countrymen to fierceness, . . . they will scarcely suffer combats and other objects of horror to be taken from them.'[2] Thus the French, by fettering themselves with these scruples,[3]

[1] *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy,* xv. 337. [2] *Ibid.* 343.

[3] In the preface of *All for Love,* v. 308, Dryden says: 'In this nicety of manners does the excellency of French poetry consist. Their heroes are the most civil people breathing, but their good breeding seldom extends to a word of sense; all their wit is in their ceremony; they want the genius which animates our stage. . . . Thus, their Hippolytus is so scrupulous in point of decency, that he will rather expose himself to death than accuse his step-mother to his father; and my critics, I am sure, will commend him for it: But we of grosser apprehensions are apt to think, that this excess of generosity is not practicable, but with fools and madmen. . . . But take Hippolytus out of his poetic fit, and I suppose he would think it a wiser part, to set the saddle on the right horse, and chuse rather to live with the reputation of a plain-spoken honest man, than to die with the infamy of an incestuous villain. . . . (The poet) has chosen to give him the turn of gallantry, sent him to travel from Athens to Paris, taught him to make love, and transformed the Hippolytus of Euripides into Monsieur Hippolite.' This criticism shows in a small compass all the common sense and freedom of thought of Dryden; but, at the same time, all the coarseness of his education and of his age.

and confining themselves in their unities and their rules, have removed action from their stage, and brought themselves down to unbearable monotony and dryness. They lack originality, naturalness, variety, fulness.

> '. . . Contented to be thinly regular. . . .
> Their tongue enfeebled is refined too much,
> And, like pure gold, it bends at every touch.
> Our sturdy Teuton yet will art obey,
> More fit for manly thought, and strengthened with allay.'[1]

Let them laugh as much as they like at Fletcher and Shakspeare; there is in them 'a more masculine fancy and greater spirit in the writing than there is in any of the French.'

Though exaggerated, this criticism is good; and because it is good, I mistrust the works which the writer is to produce. It is dangerous for an artist to be excellent in theory; the creative spirit is hardly consonant with the criticising spirit: he who, quietly seated on the shore, discusses and compares, is hardly capable of plunging straight and boldly into the stormy sea of invention. Moreover, Dryden holds himself too evenly poised betwixt the moods; original artists love solely and without justice a certain idea and a certain world; the rest disappears from their eyes; confined in one region of art, they deny or scorn the other; it is because they are limited that they are strong. We see beforehand that Dryden, pushed one way by his English mind, will be drawn another way by his French rules; that he will alternately venture and restrain himself; that he will attain mediocrity, that is, platitude; that by reason of his faults he will fall into incongruities, that is, into absurdities. All original art is self-regulated, and no original art can be regulated from without: it carries its own counterpoise, and does not receive it from elsewhere; it constitutes an inviolable whole; it is an animated existence, which lives on its own blood, and which languishes or dies if deprived of some of its blood and supplied from the veins of another. Shakspeare's imagination cannot be guided by Racine's reason, nor Racine's reason be exalted by Shakspeare's imagination; each is good in itself, and excludes its rival; to unite them would be to produce a bastard, a sick child and a monster. Disorder, violent and sudden action, harsh words, horror, depth, truth, exact imitation of reality, and the lawless outbursts of mad passions,—these features of Shakspeare become each other. Order, measure, eloquence, aristocratic refinement, worldly urbanity, exquisite painting of delicacy and virtue, all Racine's features suit each other. It would destroy the one to attenuate, the other to inflame him. Their whole being and beauty consist in the agreement of their parts: to mar this agreement would be to abolish their being and their beauty. In order to produce, we must invent a personal and harmonious conception; we must not

[1] Epistle xiv., to Mr. Motteux, xi. 70.

mingle two strange and opposite ones. Dryden has left undone what he should have done, and has done what he should not have done.

He had, moreover, the worst of audiences, debauched and frivolous, void of individual taste, floundering amid confused recollections of the national literature and deformed imitations of foreign literature, expecting nothing from the stage but the pleasure of the senses or the gratification of their curiosity. In reality, the drama, like every work of art, only makes sensible a profound idea of man and of existence; there is a hidden philosophy under its circumvolutions and violences, and the audience ought to be capable of comprehending it, as the poet is of conceiving it. The hearer must have reflected or felt with energy or refinement, in order to take in energetic or refined thoughts; Hamlet and Iphigénie will never move a vulgar roisterer or a lover of money. The character who weeps on the stage only rehearses our own tears; our interest is but that of sympathy; and the drama is like an external conscience, which shows us what we are, what we love, what we have felt. What could the drama teach to gamesters like Saint Albans, drunkards like Rochester, prostitutes like Castlemaine, old children like Charles II.? What spectators were those coarse epicureans, incapable even of an assumed decency, lovers of brutal pleasures, barbarians in their sports, obscene in words, void of honour, humanity, politeness, who made the court a house of ill fame! The splendid decorations, change of scenes, the patter of long verse and forced sentiments, the observance of a few rules imported from Paris,—such was the natural food of their vanity and folly, and such the theatre of the English Restoration.

I take one of these tragedies, very celebrated in time past, *Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr*,—a fine title, and fit to make a stir. The royal martyr is Saint Catharine, a princess of royal blood as it appears, who is brought before the tyrant Maximin. She confesses her faith, and a pagan philosopher Apollonius is set loose against her, to refute her. Maximin says:

> 'War is my province!—Priest, why stand you mute?
> You gain by heaven, and, therefore, should dispute.'

Thus encouraged, the priest argues; but St. Catharine replies in the following words:

> '. . . Reason with your fond religion fights,
> For many gods are many infinites;
> This to the first philosophers was known,
> Who, under various names, ador'd but one.'[1]

Apollonius scratches his ear a little, and then answers that there are great truths and good moral rules in paganism. The pious logician immediately replies:

---

[1] *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 2. 1.

'Then let the whole dispute concluded be
Betwixt these rules, and Christianity.'[1]

Being nonplussed, Apollonius is converted on the spot, insults the prince, who, finding St. Catharine very beautiful, becomes suddenly enamoured, and makes jokes:

'Absent, I may her martyrdom decree,
But one look more will make that martyr me.'[2]

In this dilemma he sends Placidius, 'a great officer,' to St. Catharine; the great officer quotes and praises the gods of Epicurus; forthwith the saint propounds the doctrine of final causes, which upsets that of atoms. Maximin comes himself, and says:

'Since you neglect to answer my desires,
Know, princess, you shall burn in other fires.'[3]

Thereupon she beards and defies him, calls him a slave, and walks off. Touched by these delicate manners, he wishes to marry her lawfully, and to repudiate his wife. Still, to omit no expedient, he employs a magician, who utters invocations (on the stage), summons the infernal spirits, and brings up a troop of Spirits: these dance and sing voluptuous songs about the bed of St. Catharine. Her guardian-angel comes and drives them away. As a last resource, Maximin has a wheel brought on the stage, on which to expose St. Catharine and her mother. Whilst the executioners are going to strip the saint, a modest angel descends in the nick of time, and breaks the wheel; after which they are carried off, and their throats are cut behind the wings. Add to these pretty inventions a twofold intrigue, the love of Maximin's daughter Valeria for Porphyrius, captain of the Prætorian bands, and that of Porphyrius for Berenice, Maximin's wife; then a sudden catastrophe, three deaths, and the triumph of the good people, who get married and interchange polite phrases. Such is this tragedy, which is called French-like; and most of the others are like it. In *Secret Love*, in *Marriage à la Mode*, in *Aureng-Zebe*, in the *Indian Emperor*, and especially in the *Conquest of Granada*, everything is extravagant. People cut one another to pieces, take towns, stab each other, shout lustily. These dramas have just the truth and naturalness of the libretto of an opera. Incantations abound; a spirit appears in the *Indian Emperor*, and declares that the Indian gods 'are driven to exile from their native lands.' Ballets are also there; Vasquez and Pizarro, seated in 'a pleasant grotto,' watch like conquerors the dances of the Indian girls, who gambol voluptuously about them.

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[1] *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 2. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.* 3. 1. This Maximin has a turn for jokes. Porphyrius, to whom he offers his daughter in marriage, says that 'the distance was so vast;' whereupon Maximin replies: 'Yet heaven and earth, which so remote appear, are by the air, which flows betwixt them, near' (2. 1).

Scenes worthy of Lulli[1] are not wanting; Almeria, like Armide, comes to slay Cortez in his sleep, and suddenly conceives a love for him. Yet the libretti of the opera have no incongruities; they avoid all which might shock the imagination or the eyes; they are written for men of taste, who shun ugliness and heaviness of any sort. Would you believe it? In the *Indian Emperor*, Montezuma is tortured on the stage, and to cap all, a priest tries to convert him in the meanwhile.[2] I recognise in this frightful pedantry the handsome cavaliers of the time, logicians and hangmen, who fed on controversy, and for pleasure went to look at the tortures of the Puritans. I recognise behind these heaps of improbabilities and adventures the puerile and worn-out courtiers, who, sodden with wine, were past seeing discordances, and whose nerves were only stirred by the shock of surprises and the barbarity of events.

Let us go still further. Dryden would set up on his stage the beauties of French tragedy, and in the first place, nobility of sentiments. Is it enough to copy, as he does, phrases of chivalry? He would need a whole world, for a whole world is necessary to form noble souls. Virtue, in the French tragic poets, is founded on reason, religion, education, philosophy. Their characters have that uprightness of mind, that clearness of logic, that lofty judgment, which plant in a man settled maxims and self-government. We perceive in their company the doctrines of Bossuet and Descartes; with them, reflection aids conscience; the habits of society add tact and finesse. The avoidance of violent actions and physical horrors, the meed of order and fable, the art of disguising or shunning coarse or low-bred persons, the continuous perfection of the most measured and noble style, everything contributes to raise the stage to a sublime region, and we believe in higher souls by seeing them in a purer air. Can we believe in them in Dryden? Frightful or infamous characters every instant drag us down by their crudities in their own mire. Maximin,

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[1] Lulli (1633–1687), a renowned Italian composer. *Armide* is one of his chief works.—Tr.

[2] *Christian Priest.* But we by martyrdom our faith avow.
Montezuma. You do no more than I for ours do now.
To prove religion true,
If either wit or sufferings would suffice,
All faiths afford the constant and the wise,
And yet even they, by education sway'd,
In age defend what infancy obeyed.
Christian Priest. Since age by erring childhood is misled,
Refer yourself to our unerring head.
Montezuma. Man, and not err! what reason can you give?
Christian Priest. Renounce that carnal reason, and believe. . . .
Pizarro. Increase their pains, the cords are yet too slack.
—*The Indian Emperor*, II. 2.

having stabbed Placidius, sits on his body, stabs him twice more, and says to the guards:

> 'Bring me Porphyrius and my empress dead:
> I would brave heaven, in my each hand a head.'[1]

Nourmahal, repulsed by her husband's son, insists four times with such indecent pedantry as this:

> 'And why this niceness to that pleasure shown,
> Where nature sums up all her joys in one. . . .
> Promiscuous love is nature's general law;
> For whosoever the first lovers were,
> Brother and sister made the second pair,
> And doubled by their love their piety. . . .
> You must be mine, that you may learn to live.'[2]

Illusion vanishes at once; instead of being in a room with noble characters, we meet with a mad prostitute and a drunken savage. Lift the masks; the others are little better. Almeria, to whom a crown is offered, says insolently:

> 'I take this garland, not as given by you,
> But as my merit, and my beauty's due.'[3]

Indamora, to whom an old courtier makes love, settles him with the boastfulness of an upstart and the coarseness of a kitchen-maid:

> 'Were I no queen, did you my beauty weigh,
> My youth in bloom, your age in its decay.'[4]

None of these heroines know how to conduct themselves; they look on impertinence as dignity, sensuality as tenderness; they have the

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[1] *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 5. 1. When dying Maximin says: 'And shoving back this earth on which I sit, I'll mount, and scatter all the Gods I hit.'

[2] *Aureng-Zebe*, v. 4. 1. Dryden thought he was imitating Racine, when six lines further on he makes Nourmahal say:

> 'I am not changed, I love my husband still;
> But love him as he was, when youthful grace
> And the first down began to shade his face:
> That image does my virgin-flames renew,
> And all your father shines more bright in you.'

Racine's Phèdre (2. 5) thinks her husband Theseus dead, and says to her stepson Hippolytus:

> 'Oui, prince, je languis, je brûle pour Thésée:
> Je l'aime . . .
> Mais fidèle, mais fier, et même un peu farouche,
> Charmant, jeune, traînant tous les cœurs après soi,
> Tel qu'on dépeint nos dieux, ou tel que je vous voi.
> Il avait votre port, vos yeux, votre langage;
> Cette noble pudeur colorait son visage.'

According to a note in Sir Walter Scott's edition of Dryden's works, Langbaine traces this speech also to Seneca's Hippolytus.—TR.

[3] *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 2.

[4] *Aureng-Zebe*, v. 2. 1.

recklessness of the courtesan, the jealousies of the grisette, the pettiness of a chapman's wife, the billingsgate of a fishwoman. The heroes are the most unpleasant of swashbucklers. Leonidas, first recognised as hereditary prince, then suddenly forsaken, consoles himself with this modest reflection:

> 'Tis true I am alone.
> So was the godhead, ere he made the world,
> And better served himself than served by nature.
> . . . I have scene enough within
> To exercise my virtue.' [1]

Shall I speak of that great trumpet-blower Almanzor, painted, as Dryden confesses, after Artaban,[2] a redresser of wrongs, a battalion-smiter, a destroyer of kingdoms?[3] They are but overcharged sentiments, extemporised devotions, exaggerated generosities, high-sounding brag of a clumsy chivalry; at bottom the characters are clods and barbarians, who have tried to deck themselves in French honour and fashionable politeness. And such, in fact, was the English court: it imitated that of Louis XIV. as a sign-painter imitates an artist. It had neither taste nor refinement, and wished to appear as if it possessed them. Panders and licentious women, bullying or butchering courtiers, who would go and see Harrison drawn, or mutilate Coventry, maids of honour who have awkward accidents at a ball,[4] or sell to the planters the convicts presented to them, a palace full of baying dogs and yelling gamesters, a king who would bandy obscenities in public with his half-naked mistresses,[5]—such was this illustrious society; from French modes they took but those of dress, from their noble sentiments but high-sounding words.

IV.

The second point worthy of imitation in classical tragedy is the style. Dryden, in fact, purifies his own, and renders it more clear, by introducing close reasoning and precise words. He has oratorical discussions like Corneille, well-delivered retorts, symmetrical, like a

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[1] *Marriage à la Mode*, iv. 3. 1.

[2] 'The first image I had of him was from the Achilles of Homer, the next from Tasso's Rinaldo, and the third from the Artaban of Monsieur Calprenède.'—Preface to *Almanzor*.

[3] 'The Moors have heaven, and me, to assist their cause' (i. 1).
'I'll whistle thy tame fortune after me' (3. 1).
He falls in love, and speaks thus:

> 'Tis he; I feel him now in every part;
> Like a new lord he vaunts about my heart,
> Surveys in state each corner of my breast,
> While poor fierce I, that was, am dispossess'd' (3. 1).

[4] See vol. i. 471.

[5] Compare the song of the Zambra dance in the first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, o. 1.

duel of argument. He has maxims vigorously enclosed in the compass of a single line, distinctions, developments, and the whole art of special pleading. He has happy antitheses, ornamental epithets, finely-wrought comparisons, and all the artifices of the literary mind. What is most striking is, that he abandons the dramatic and national verse, which is without rhyme, and the mixture of prose and verse common to the old authors, for a rhymed tragedy like the French, fancying that he is thus inventing a new species, which he calls heroic play. But in this transformation the good perished, the bad remains. For mark, rhyme is a different thing in different races. To an Englishman it resembles a song, and transports him at once to an ideal and fairy world. To a Frenchman it is only a conventionalism or an expediency, and transports him at once to an ante-chamber or a drawing-room; to him it is an ornamental dress and nothing more; if it mars prose, it ennobles it; it imposes respect, not enthusiasm, and changes a vulgar into a high-bred style. Moreover, in French aristocratic verse everything is connected; pedantry, logical machinery of every kind, is excluded from it; there is nothing more disagreeable to well-bred and refined persons than the scholastic rust. Images are rare, but always well kept up; bold poesy, real fantasy, have no place in it; their brilliancy and divergencies would derange the politeness and regular flow of the social world. The right word, the prominence of free expressions, are not to be met with in it; general terms, always rather threadbare, suit best the caution and niceties of select society. Dryden stumbles heavily against all these rules. His rhymes, to an Englishman's ear, scatter at once the whole illusion of the stage; they see that the characters who speak thus are but squeaking mannikins; he himself admits that his heroic tragedy is only fit to represent on the stage chivalric poems like those of Ariosto and Spenser.

Poetic dash gives the finishing stroke to all likelihood. Would you recognise the dramatic accent in this epic comparison?

> 'As some fair tulip, by a storm oppress'd,
> Shrinks up, and folds its silken arms to rest;
> And, bending to the blast, all pale and dead,
> Hears, from within, the wind sing round its head,—
> So, shrouded up, your beauty disappears:
> Unveil, my love, and lay aside your fears,
> The storm, that caused your fright, is pass'd and done.'[1]

What a singular triumphal song are these *concetti* of Cortez as he lands:

> 'On what new happy climate are we thrown,
> So long kept secret, and so lately known?
> As if our old world modestly withdrew,
> And here in private had brought forth a new.'[2]

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[1] The first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, iv. 5. 2.

[2] *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 1. 1.

Think how these patches of colour would contrast with the sober design of French dissertation. Here lovers lay siege with metaphors; there a wooer, in order to magnify the beauties of his mistress, says that 'bloody hearts lie panting in her hand.' In every page harsh or vulgar words spoil the regularity of a noble style. Ponderous logic is broadly displayed in the speeches of princesses. 'Two ifs,' says Lyndaraxa, 'scarce make one possibility.'[1] Dryden sets his college cap on the heads of these poor women. Neither he nor his characters are well brought up; they have taken from the French but the outer garb of the bar and the schools; they have left behind symmetrical eloquence, measured diction, elegance and delicacy. A while before, the licentious coarseness of the Restoration pierced the mask of the fine sentiments with which it was covered; now the rude English imagination breaks the oratorical mould in which it tried to enclose itself.

Let us turn the picture. Dryden would keep the foundation of the old English drama, and retains the abundance of events, the variety of plot, the surprise of accident, and the physical representation of bloody or violent action. He kills as many people as Shakspeare. Unfortunately, all poets are not justified in killing. When they take their spectators among murders and sudden accidents, they ought to have a hundred hidden preparations. Fancy a sort of rapture and romantic folly, a most daring style, eccentric and poetical, songs, pictures, reveries spoken aloud, frank scorn of all verisimilitude, a mixture of tenderness, philosophy, and mockery, all the retiring charms of varied feelings, all the whims of a buoyant fancy; the truth of events matters little. No one before *Cymbeline* or *As you Like it* was a politician or a historian; no one took these military processions, these accessions of princes, seriously; the spectators were present at dissolving views. They did not demand that things should proceed after the laws of nature; on the contrary, they willingly did require that they should proceed against the laws of nature. The irrationality is the charm. That new world must be all imagination; if it was only so by halves, no one would care to rise to it. This is why we do not rise to Dryden's. A queen dethroned, then suddenly set up again; a tyrant who finds his lost son, is deceived, adopts a girl in his place; a young prince led to punishment, who snatches the sword of a guard, and recovers his crown: such are the romances which constitute the *Maiden Queen* and the *Marriage à la Mode*. We can imagine what a display classical dissertations make in this medley; solid reason beats down imagination, stroke after stroke, to the ground. We cannot tell if the matter be a true portrait or a fancy painting; we remain suspended between truth and fancy; we should like either to get up to

[1] The first part of *Almanzor and Almahide*, iv. 2. 1. This same Lyndaraxa says also to Abdalla (4. 2), 'Poor women's thoughts are all extempore, and logical, and coarse;' in Act 2. 1, to the same lover, who entreats her to make him 'happy,' 'If I make you so, you shall pay my price.'

heaven or down to earth, and we jump down as quick as possible from the clumsy scaffolding where the poet would perch us.

On the other hand, when Shakspeare wishes to impress a doctrine, not raise a dream, he disposes us to it beforehand, but after another fashion. We naturally remain in doubt before a cruel action: we divine that the red irons which are about to put out the eyes of little Arthur are painted sticks, and that the six rascals who besiege Rome, are supernumeraries hired at a shilling a night. To conquer this mistrust we must employ the most natural style, circumstantial and rude imitation of the manners of the guardroom and of the alehouse; I could only believe in Jack Cade's sedition on hearing the dirty words of bestial lewdness and mobbish stupidity. You must let me have the jests, the coarse laughter, drunkenness, the manners of butchers and tanners, to make me imagine a mob or an election. So in murders, let me feel the fire of bubbling passion, the accumulation of despair or hate which have unchained the will and nerved the hand. When the unchecked words, the fits of rage, the convulsive ejaculations of exasperated desire, have brought me in contact with all the links of the inward necessity which has moulded the man and guided the crime, I shall no longer think whether the knife is bloody, because I shall feel with inner trembling the passion which has handled it. Must I verify the death of Shakspeare's Cleopatra? The strange laugh that bursts from her when the basket of saps is brought, the sudden tension of nerves, the flow of feverish words, the fitful gaiety, the coarse language, the torrent of ideas with which she overflows, have already made me sound all the depths of suicide,[1] and I have foreseen it from the beginning. This madness of an imagination, fired by climate and despotic power; these woman's, queen's, prostitute's nerves; this marvellous self-abandonment to all the raptures of invention and desire—these cries, tears, foam on the lips, tempest of insults, actions,

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[1] 'He words me, girls; he words me, that I should not
Be noble to myself; but hark thee, Charmian. . . .
Now, Iras, what think'st thou?
Thou, an Egyptian puppet, shalt be shown
In Rome, as well as I: mechanic slaves,
With greasy aprons, rules and hammers, shall
Uplift us to the view. . . .
Saucy lictors
Will catch at us, like strumpets; and scald rhymers
Ballad us out o' tune; the quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels; Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore. . . .
Husband, I come:
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire and air; my other elements

emotions; this promptitude to murder, announce the rage with which she would rush against the least obstacle and be dashed to pieces. What does Dryden effect in this matter with his written phrases? What of the maid, speaking in the author's words, who bids her half-mad mistress 'call reason to assist you?' What of such a Cleopatra as his, designed after Lady Castlemaine,[1] skilled in artifices and whimpering, voluptuous and a coquette, with neither the nobleness of virtue nor the greatness of crime:

> 'Nature meant me
> A wife; a silly, harmless, household dove,
> Fond without art, and kind without deceit.'[2]

Nay, certainly, or at least this turtle-dove would not have tamed or kept an Antony; a woman without any prejudices alone could do it, by the superiority of boldness and the fire of genius. I can see already from the title of the piece why Dryden has softened Shakspeare: *All for Love; or, the World well Lost.* What a wretchedness, to reduce such events to a pastoral, to excuse Antony, to praise Charles II. indirectly, to bleat as in a sheepfold! And such was the taste of his contemporaries. When Dryden wrote the *Tempest* after Shakspeare, and the *State of Innocence* after Milton, he again spoiled the ideas of his masters; he turned Eve and Miranda into courtesans;[3] he extinguished everywhere, under conventionalism and indecencies, the frankness, severity, delicacy, and charm of the original invention. By his side, Settle, Shadwell, Sir Robert Howard did worse. *The Empress of Morocco*, by Settle, was so admired, that the gentlemen and ladies of the court learned it by heart, to play at Whitehall before the king. And this was not a passing

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I give to baser life. So; have you done?
Come, then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, long farewell. . . .
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?'—Shakspeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, 5. 2. These two last lines, referring to the asp, are sublime as the joke of a courtesan and an artist.

[1] 'Come to me, come, my soldier, to my arms!
You've been too long away from my embraces;
But, when I have you fast, and all my own,
With broken murmurs, and with amorous sighs,
I'll say, you were unkind, and punish you,
And mark you red with many an eager kiss.'—*All for Love*, v. 3. 1.

[2] *All for Love*, 4. 1.

[3] Dryden's Miranda says, in the *Tempest* (2. 2): 'And if I can but escape with life, I had rather be in pain nine months, as my father threatened, than lose my longing.' Miranda has a sister; they quarrel, are jealous of each other, and so on. See also in *The State of Innocence*, 3. 1, the description which Eve gives of her happiness, and the ideas which her confidences suggest to Satin.

fancy; although modified, the taste was to endure. In vain poets rejected a part of the French alloy wherewith they had mixed their native metal; in vain they returned to the old unrhymed verses of Jonson and Shakspeare; in vain Dryden, in the parts of Antony, Ventidius, Octavia, Don Sebastian, and Dorax, recovered a portion of the old naturalness and energy; in vain Otway, who had real dramatic talent, Lee, or Southern attained a true or touching accent, so that once, in *Venice Preserved*, it was thought that the drama would be regenerated. The drama was dead, and tragedy could not replace it; or rather each one died by the other; and their union, which robbed them of strength in Dryden's time, enervated them also in the time of his successors. Literary style blunted dramatic truth; dramatic truth marred literary style; the work was neither sufficiently vivid nor sufficiently well written: the author was too little of a poet or of an orator; he had neither Shakspeare's fire of imagination nor Racine's polish and art.[1] He strayed on the boundaries of two dramas, and suited neither the half-barbarous men of art nor the well-polished men of the court. Such indeed was the audience, hesitating between two forms of thought, fed by two opposite civilisations. They had no longer the freshness of sense, the depth of impression, the bold originality and poetic folly of the cavaliers and adventurers of the Renaissance; nor will they ever acquire the aptness of speech, sweetness of manners, courtly habits, and cultivation of sentiment and thought which adorned the court of Louis XIV. They are quitting the age of solitary imagination and invention, which suits their race, for the age of reasoning and conversation, which does not suit their race: they lose their own merits, and do not acquire the merits of others. They were meagre poets and ill-bred courtiers, having lost the art of imagination and of good manners, at times dull or brutal, at times emphatic or stiff. For the production of fine poetry, race and age must concur. This race, diverging from its own age, and fettered at the outset by foreign imitation, formed its classical literature but slowly; it will only attain it after transforming its religious and political condition: the age will be that of English reason. Dryden inaugurates it by his other works, and the writers who appear in the reign of Queen Anne will give it its completion, its authority, and its splendour.

V.

But let us pause a moment longer to inquire whether, amid so many abortive and distorted branches, the old theatrical stock, abandoned by chance to itself, will not produce at some point a sound and living shoot. When a man like Dryden, so gifted, so well trained and experienced, works with a will, there is hope that he will some time succeed; and once, in part at least, Dryden did succeed. It would be treating him

[1] This impotence reminds one of Casimir Delavigne.

unjustly to be always comparing him with Shakspeare; but even on Shakspeare's ground, with the same materials, it is possible to create a fine work; only the reader must forget for a while the great inventor, the inexhaustible creator of vehement and original souls, and to consider the imitator on his own merits, without forcing an overwhelming comparison.

There is vigour and art in this tragedy of Dryden, *All for Love*. 'He has informed us, that this was the only play written to please himself.'[1] And he had really composed it learnedly, according to history and logic. And what is better still, he wrote it in a manly style. In the preface he says:

'The fabric of the play is regular enough, as to the inferior parts of it; and the unities of time, place, and action, more exactly observed, than perhaps the English theatre requires. Particularly, the action is so much one, that it is the only of the kind without episode, or underplot; every scene in the tragedy conducing to the main design, and every act concluding with a turn of it.'

He did more; he abandoned the French ornaments, and returned to national tradition:

'In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakspeare; which that I might perform more freely, I have disincumbered myself from rhyme. . . . Yet, I hope, I may affirm, and without vanity, that, by imitating him, I have excelled myself throughout the play; and particularly, that I prefer the scene betwixt Antony and Ventidius in the first act, to anything which I have written in this kind.'

Dryden was right; if Cleopatra is weak, if this feebleness of conception takes away the interest and mars the general effect, if the new rhetoric and the old emphasis at times suspend the emotion and destroy the likelihood, yet on the whole the drama stands erect, and what is more, moves on. The poet is skilful; he has planned, he knows how to construct a scene, to represent the internal struggle by which two passions contend for a human heart. We perceive the tragical vicissitude of the strife, the progress of a sentiment, the overthrow of obstacles, the slow growth of desire or wrath, to the very instant when the resolution, rising up of itself or seduced from without, rushes suddenly on one side. There are natural words; the poet thinks and writes too genuinely not to discover them at need. There are manly characters: he himself is a man; and beneath his courtier's pliability, his affectations as a fashionable poet, he has retained his stern and energetic character. Except for one scene of recrimination, his Octavia is a Roman matron; and when, even in Alexandria, in Cleopatra's palace, she comes to look for Antony, she does it with a simplicity and nobility, not to be surpassed. 'Cæsar's sister,' cries out Antony, accosting her. Octavia answers:

> 'That's unkind.
> Had I been nothing more than Cæsar's sister,

[1] See the introductory notice, by Sir Walter Scott, of *All for Love*, v. 290.

Know, I had still remain'd in Cæsar's camp:
But your Octavia, your much injured wife,
Though banish'd from your bed, driven from your house,
In spite of Cæsar's sister, still is yours.
'Tis true, I have a heart disdains your coldness,
And prompts me not to seek what you should offer;
But a wife's virtue still surmounts that pride.
I come to claim you as my own; to show
My duty first, to ask, nay beg, your kindness:
Your hand, my lord; 'tis mine, and I will have it.'[1]

Antony, humiliated, refuses the pardon Octavia has brought him, and tells her:

'I fear, Octavia, you have begg'd my life, . . .
Poorly and basely begg'd it of your brother.
Octavia, Poorly and basely I could never beg,
Nor could my brother grant. . . .
My hard fortune
Subjects me still to your unkind mistakes.
But the conditions I have brought are such,
You need not blush to take: I love your honour,
Because 'tis mine; it never shall be said,
Octavia's husband was her brother's slave.
Sir, you are free; free, even from her you loath;
For, though my brother bargains for your love,
Makes me the price and cement of your peace,
I have a soul like yours; I cannot take
Your love as alms, nor beg what I deserve.
I'll tell my brother we are reconciled;
He shall draw back his troops, and you shall march
To rule the East: I may be dropt at Athens;
No matter where. I never will complain,
But only keep the barren name of wife,
And rid you of the trouble.'[2]

This is lofty; this woman has a proud heart, and also a wife's heart: she knows how to give and how to bear; and better, she knows how to sacrifice herself without self-assertion, and calmly; no vulgar mind conceived such a soul as this. And Ventidius, the old general, who with her and before her, comes to rescue Antony from his illusion and servitude, is worthy to speak in behalf of honour, as she had spoken for duty. Doubtless he was a plebeian, a rude and plain-speaking soldier, with the frankness and jests of his profession, sometimes clumsy, such as a clever eunuch can dupe, 'a thick-skulled hero,' who, out of simplicity of soul, from the coarseness of his training, unsuspectingly brings Antony back to the meshes, which he seemed to be breaking through. Falling into a trap, he tells Antony that he has seen Cleopatra unfaithful with Dolabella:

[1] *All for Love,* v. 3. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

'*Antony.* My Cleopatra?
Ventidius. Your Cleopatra.
Dolabella's Cleopatra.
Every man's Cleopatra.
Antony. Thou liest.
Ventidius. I do not lie, my lord.
Is this so strange? Should mistresses be left,
And not provide against a time of change?
You know she's not much used to lonely nights.'[1]

It was just the way to make Antony jealous, and bring him back furious to Cleopatra. But what a noble heart has this Ventidius, and how we catch, when he is alone with Antony, the man's voice, the deep tones which had been heard on the battlefield! He loves his general like a good dog, and asks no better than to die, so it be at his master's feet. He growls ominously on seeing him cast down, crouches round him, and suddenly weeps:

'*Ventidius.* Look, emperor, this is no common dew.
I have not wept this forty years; but now
My mother comes afresh into my eyes,
I cannot help her softness.
Antony. By Heaven, he weeps! poor, good old man, he weeps!
The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheeks.—Stop them, Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death: they set my shame,
That caused them, full before me.
Ventidius. I'll do my best.
Antony. Sure there's contagion in the tears of friends:
See, I have caught it too. Believe me, 'tis not
For my own griefs, but thine. Nay, father!'[2]

As we hear these terrible sobs, we think of Tacitus' veterans, who, escaping from the marshes of Germany, with scarred breasts, white heads, limbs stiff with service, kissed the hands of Drusus, carried his fingers to their gums, that he might feel their worn and loosened teeth, incapable to bite the wretched bread which was given to them:

'No; 'tis you dream; you sleep away your hours
In desperate sloth, miscall'd philosophy.
Up, up, for honour's sake; twelve legions wait you,
And long to call you chief: By painful journies,
I led them, patient both of heat and hunger,
Down from the Parthian marshes to the Nile.
'Twill do you good to see their sun-burnt faces,
Their scarr'd cheeks, and chopt hands; there's virtue in them.
They'll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates
Than yon trim bands can buy.'[3]

And when all is lost, when the Egyptians have turned traitors, and there is nothing left but to die well, Ventidius says:

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[1] *All for Love*, 4. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 1. 1. [3] *Ibid.*

'There yet remain
Three legions in the town. The last assault
Lopt off the rest: if death be your design,—
As I must wish it now,—these are sufficient
To make a heap about us of dead foes,
An honest pile for burial. . . . Chuse your death;
For, I have seen him in such various shapes,
I care not which I take: I'm only troubled.
The life I bear is worn to such a rag,
'Tis scarce worth giving. I could wish, indeed,
We threw it from us with a better grace;
That, like two lions taken in the toils,
We might at least thrust out our paws, and wound
The hunters that inclose us.'[1] . . .

Antony begs him to go, but he refuses:

'*Antony.* Do not deny me twice.
Ventidius. By Heaven I will not.
Let it not be to outlive you.
Antony. Kill me first,
And then die thou; for 'tis but just thou serve
Thy friend, before thyself.
Ventidius. Give me your hand.
We soon shall meet again. Now, farewell, emperor!
. . . I will not make a business of a trifle:
And yet I cannot look on you, and kill you.
Pray, turn your face.
Antony. I do: strike home, be sure.
Ventidius. Home, as my sword will reach.'[2]

And with one blow he kills himself. These are the tragic, stoical manners of a military monarchy, the great profusion of murders and sacrifices wherewith the men of this overturned and shattered society killed and died. This Antony, for whom so much has been done, is not undeserving of their love: he has been one of Cæsar's heroes, the first soldier of the van; kindness and generosity breathe from him to the last; if he is weak against a woman, he is strong against men; he has the muscles and heart, the wrath and passions of a soldier; it is this heat of blood, this too quick sentiment of honour, which has caused his ruin; he cannot forgive his own crime; he possesses not that lofty genius which, dwelling in a region superior to ordinary rules, emancipates a man from hesitation, from discouragement and remorse; he is only a soldier, he cannot forget that he has not executed the orders given to him:

'*Ventidius.* Emperor!
Antony. Emperor? Why, that's the style of victory;
The conquering soldier, red with unfelt wounds,
Salutes his general so; but never more
Shall that sound reach my ears.

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[1] *All for Love*, 5. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

Ventidius. I warrant you.
Antony. Actium, Actium! Oh——
Ventidius. It sits too near you.
Antony. Here, here it lies; a lump of lead by day;
And in my short, distracted, nightly slumbers,
The hag that rides my dreams. . . .
Ventidius. That's my royal master;
And, shall we fight?
Antony. I warrant thee, old soldier.
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron;
And at the head of our old troops, that beat
The Parthians, cry aloud, "Come, follow me."'[1]

He fancies himself on the battlefield, and already passion carries him away. Such a man is not one to govern men; we cannot master fortune until we have mastered ourselves; this man is only made to belie and destroy himself, and to be veered round alternately by every passion. As soon as he believes Cleopatra faithful, honour, reputation, empires, everything vanishes:

'*Ventidius.* And what's this toy,
In balance with your fortune, honour, fame?
Antony. What is't, Ventidius? it outweighs them all.
Why, we have more than conquer'd Cæsar now.
My queen's not only innocent, but loves me. . . .
Down on thy knees, blasphemer as thou art,
And ask forgiveness of wrong'd innocence!
Ventidius. I'll rather die than take it. Will you go?
Antony. Go! Whither? Go from all that's excellent!
. . . Give, you gods,
Give to your boy, your Cæsar,
This rattle of a globe to play withal,
This gewgaw world; and put him cheaply off:
I'll not be pleased with less than Cleopatra.'[2]

Dejection follows excess; these souls are only tempered against fear; their courage is but that of the bull and the lion; to be fully themselves, they need bodily action, visible danger; their temperament sustains them; before great moral sufferings they give way. When Antony thinks himself deceived, he despairs, and has nothing left but to die:

'Let him (Cæsar) walk
Alone upon't. I'm weary of my part.
My torch is out; and the world stands before me,
Like a black desert at the approach of night
I'll lay me down, and stray no farther on.'[3]

Such verses remind us of Othello's gloomy dreams, of Macbeth, of Hamlet's even; beyond the pile of swelling tirades and characters of painted cardboard, it is as though the poet had touched the ancient drama, and brought its emotion away with him.

[1] *All for Love*, 1. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 2. 1, end. [3] *Ibid.* 5. 1.

By his side another also has felt it, a young man, a poor adventurer, by turns a student, actor, officer, always wild and always poor, who lived madly and sadly in excess and misery, like the old dramatists, with their inspiration, their fire, and who died at the age of thirty-four, according to some of a fever caused by fatigue, according to others of a prolonged fast, at the end of which he swallowed too quickly a morsel of bread bestowed on him in charity. Through the pompous cloak of the new rhetoric, Thomas Otway now and then reached the passions of the other age. It is plain that the times he lived in marred him, that the oratorical style, the literary phrases, the classical declamation, the well-poised antitheses, buzzed about him, and drowned his note in their sustained and monotonous hum. Had he but been born a hundred years earlier! In his *Orphan* and *Venice Preserved* we encounter the sombre imaginations of Webster, Ford, and Shakspeare, their gloomy idea of life, their atrocities, murders, pictures of irresistible passions, which riot blindly like a herd of savage beasts, and make a chaos of the battlefield, with their yells and tumult, leaving behind them but devastation and heaps of dead. Like Shakspeare, his events are human transports and furies—a brother violating his brother's wife, a husband perjuring himself for his wife; Polydore, Chamont, Jaffier, weak and violent souls, the sport of chance, the prey of temptation, with whom transport or crime, like poison poured into the veins, gradually ascends, envenoms the whole man, is spread on all whom he touches, and contorts and casts them down together in a convulsive delirium. Like Shakspeare, he has found poignant and living words,[1] which lay bare the depths of humanity, the strange noise of a machine which is getting out of order, the tension of the will stretched to breaking-point,[2] the simplicity of real sacrifice, the humility of exasperated and craving passion, which longs to the end and against all hope for its fuel and its gratification.[3] Like Shakspeare, he has conceived genuine women,[4]—

[1] Monimia says, in the *Orphan* (5, end), when dying, 'How my head swims! 'Tis very dark; good night.'

[2] See the death of Pierre and Jaffier in *Venice Preserved* (5, last scene). Pierre, stabbed once, bursts into a laugh.

[3] '*Jaffier.* Oh, that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever! But my friends, my oath!
This, and no more. (*Kisses her.*)
Belvidera. Another, sure another
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of;
I'll giv't him truly.'—*Venice Preserved*, 5. 1.
There is jealousy in this last word.

[4] 'Oh, thou art tender all,
Gentle and kind, as sympathizing nature,
Dove-like, soft and kind. . . .
I'll ever live your most obedient wife,
Nor ever any privilege pretend
Beyond your will.'—*Orphan*, 4. 1.

Monimia, above all Belvidera, who, like Imogen, has given herself wholly, and is lost as in an abyss of adoration for him whom she has chosen, who can but love, obey, weep, suffer, and who dies like a flower plucked from the stalk, when her arms are torn from the neck around which she has locked them. Like Shakspeare again, he has found, at least once, the large bitter buffoonery, the crude sentiment of human baseness; and he has introduced into his most painful tragedy, an obscene caricature, an old senator, who unbends from his official gravity in order to play at his mistress' house the clown or the valet. How bitter! how true was his conception, in making the busy man eager to leave his robes and his ceremonies! how ready the man is to abase himself, when, escaped from his part, he comes to his real self! how the ape and the dog crop out of him! The senator Antonio comes to his Aquilina, who insults him; he is amused; hard words relieve other compliments; he minces, runs into a falsetto like a zany at a country fair:

'*Antonio.* Nacky, Nacky, Nacky,—how dost do, Nacky? Hurry, durry. I am come, little Nacky. Past eleven o'clock, a late hour; time in all conscience to go to bed, Nacky.—Nacky did I say? Ay, Nacky, Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina; Aquilina, Naquilina, Acky, Nacky, queen Nacky.—Come, let's to bed. —You fubbs, you pug you—You little puss.—Purree tuzzy—I am a senator.

Aquilina. You are a fool, I am sure.

Antonio. May be so too, sweet-heart. Never the worse senator for all that. Come, Nacky, Nacky; let's have a game at romp, Nacky! . . . You won't sit down? Then look you now; suppose me a bull, a Basan-bull, the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus up I get, and with my brows thus bent—I broo; I say I broo, I broo, I broo. You won't sit down, will you—I broo. . . . Now, I'll be a senator again, and thy lover, little Nicky, Nacky. Ah, toad, toad, toad, toad, spit in my face a little, Nacky; spit in my face, pry'thee, spit in my face, never so little; spit but a little bit,—spit, spit, spit, spit when you are bid, I say; do pry'thee, spit.—Now, now spit. What, you won't spit, will you? Then I'll be a dog.

Aquilina. A dog, my lord!

Antonio. Ay, a dog, and I'll give thee this t'other purse to let me be a dog—and to use me like a dog a little. Hurry durry, I will—here 'tis. (*Gives the purse.*) . . . Now bough waugh waugh, bough, waugh.

Aquilina. Hold, hold, sir. If curs bite, they must be kicked, sir. Do you see, kicked thus?

Antonio. Ay, with all my heart. Do, kick, kick on, now I am under the table, kick again,—kick harder—harder yet—bough, waugh, waugh, bough.—Odd, I'll have a snap at thy shins.—Bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough—odd, she kicks bravely.'[1]

At last she takes a whip, thrashes him soundly, and turns him out of the house. He will return, you may be sure; it has been a pleasant night for him; he rubs his back, but he was amused. In fine, he was but a clown who had missed his vocation, whom chance has given an

[1] *Venice Preserved*, 3. 1. Antonio is meant as a copy of the 'celebrated Earl of Shaftesbury, the lewdness of whose latter years,' says Mr. Thornton in his edition of Otway's Works, 3 vols. 1815, 'was a subject of general notoriety.'—TR.

embroidered silk gown, and who turns out at so much an hour political harlequinades. He feels more natural, more at his ease, playing Punch than aping a statesman.

These are but gleams: for the most part Otway is a poet of his time, dull and forced in colour; buried, like the rest, in the heavy, grey, clouded atmosphere, half English, half French, in which the bright lights brought over from France, are snuffed out by the insular fogs. He is a man of his time: like the rest, he writes obscene comedies, *The Soldier's Fortune*, *The Atheist*, *Friendship in Fashion*. He depicts coarse and vicious cavaliers, rogues on principle, as harsh and corrupt as those of Wycherley; Beaugard, who vaunts and practises the maxims of Hobbes; the father, an old, corrupt rascal, who brags of his morality, and whom his son coldly sends to the dogs with a bag of crowns: Sir Jolly Jumble, a kind of base Falstaff, a pander by profession, whom the courtesans call 'papa, daddy,' who, 'if he sits but at the table with one, he'll be making nasty figures in the napkins:'[1] Sir Davy Dunce, a disgusting animal, who 'has such a breath, one kiss of him were enough to cure the fits of the mother; 'tis worse than assafœtida. Clean linen, he says, is unwholesome . . .: he is continually eating of garlic, and chewing tobacco:'[2] Polydore, who, enamoured of his father's ward, tries to force her in the first scene, envies the brutes, and makes up his mind to imitate them on the next occasion.[3] Even his heroines he defiles.[4] Truly this society sickens us. They thought

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[1] *The Soldier's Fortune*, I. 1. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] 'Who'd be that sordid foolish thing called man,
To cringe thus, fawn, and flatter for a pleasure,
Which beasts enjoy so very much above him?
The lusty bull ranges thro' all the field,
And from the herd singling his female out,
Enjoys her, and abandons her at will.
It shall be so, I'll yet possess my love,
Wait on, and watch her loose unguarded hours:
Then, when her roving thoughts have been abroad,
And brought in wanton wishes to her heart;
I' th' very minute when her virtue nods,
I'll rush upon her in a storm of love,
Beat down her guard of honour all before me,
Surfeit on joys, till ev'n desire grow sick;
Then by long absence liberty regain,
And quite forget the pleasure and the pain.'—*The Orphan*, I. 1.
It is impossible to see together more moral roguery and literary correctness.

[4] '*Page* (to Monimia). In the morning when you call me to you,
And by your bed I stand and tell you stories,
I am ashamed to see your swelling breasts;
It makes me blush, they are so very white.
Monimia. Oh men, for flatt'ry and deceit renown'd!'
—*The Orphan*, I. 1.

to cover all their filth with fine correct metaphors, neatly ended poetical periods, a garment of harmonious phrases and noble expressions. They thought to equal Racine by counterfeiting his style. They did not know that in this style visible elegance conceals an admirable justness; that if it is a masterpiece of art, it is also a picture of manners; that the most refined and accomplished in society alone could speak and understand it; that it paints a civilisation, as Shakspeare's does; that each of these lines, which appear so restricted, has its inflection and artifice; that all passions, and every shade of passion, are expressed in them,—not, it is true, wild and entire, as in Shakspeare, but pared down and refined by courtly life; that this is a spectacle as unique as the other; that nature perfectly polished is as complex and as difficult to understand as nature perfectly intact; that as for them, they were as far below the one as above the other; and that, in short, their characters are as much like Racine's as the porter of Mons. de Beauvilliers or the cook of Madame de Sévigné are like Madame de Sévigné or Mons. de Beauvilliers.[1]

VI.

Let us then leave this drama in the obscurity which it deserves, and seek elsewhere, in studied writings, for a happier employment of a fuller talent.

This is the true domain of Dryden and of classical reason:[2] pamphlets and dissertations in verse, letters, satires, translations and imitations, this is the field on which logical faculties and the art of writing find their best occupation. Before descending into it, and observing their work, it will be as well to study more closely the man who so wielded them.

His was a singularly solid and judicious mind, an excellent reasoner, accustomed to discriminate his ideas, armed with good long-meditated proofs, strong in discussion, asserting principles, establishing his subdivisions, citing authorities, drawing inferences; so that, if we read his prefaces without reading his dramas, we might take him for one of the masters of the dramatic art. He naturally attains a definite prose style; his ideas are unfolded with breadth and clearness; his style is well moulded, exact and simple, free from the affectations and ornaments with which Pope afterwards burdened his own; his expression is, like that of Corneille, ample and periodic, by virtue simply of the internal argumentativeness which unfolds and sustains it. We can see

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[1] Burns said, after his arrival in Edinburgh, 'Between the man of rustic life and the polite world, I observed little difference. . . . But a refined and accomplished woman was a being altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea.'—(*Burns' Works*, ed. Cunningham, 1832, 8 vols., i. 207.)

[2] Dryden says, in his *Essay on Satire*, xiii. 30, 'the stage to which my genius never much inclined me.'

that he thinks, and that on his own behalf; that he combines and verifies his thoughts; that beyond all this, he naturally has a just perception, and that with his method he has good sense. He has the tastes and the weaknesses which suit his cast of intellect. He holds in the highest estimation 'the admirable Boileau, whose numbers are excellent, whose expressions are noble, whose thoughts are just, whose language is pure, whose satire is pointed, and whose sense is close. What he borrows from the ancients, he repays with usury of his own, in coin as good, and almost as universally valuable.'[1] He has the stiffness of the logician poets, too strict and argumentative, blaming Ariosto, 'who neither designed justly, nor observed any unity of action, or compass of time, or moderation in the vastness of his draught; his style is luxurious, without majesty or decency, and his adventures without the compass of nature and possibility.'[2] He understands delicacy no better than fancy. Speaking of Horace, he finds that 'his wit is faint and his salt almost insipid. Juvenal is of a more vigorous and masculine wit; he gives me as much pleasure as I can bear.'[3] For the same reason he depreciates the French style: 'Their language is not strung with sinews, like our English; it has the nimbleness of a greyhound, but not the bulk and body of a mastiff. . . . They have set up purity for the standard of their language; and a masculine vigour is that of ours.'[4] Two or three such words depict a man; Dryden has just affirmed, unwittingly, the measure and quality of his mind.

This mind, as we may imagine, is heavy, and especially in flattery. Flattery is the chief art in a monarchical age. Dryden is hardly skilful in it, any more than his contemporaries. Across the Channel, at the same epoch, they praised just as much, but without cringing too low, because praise was decked out; now disguised or relieved by charm of style; now looking as if men took to it as to a fashion. Thus delicately rendered, people are able to digest it. But here, far from the fine aristocratic kitchen, it weighs like an undigested mass upon the stomach. I have related how Lord Clarendon, hearing that his daughter had just married the Duke of York in secret, begged the king to have her instantly beheaded;[5] how the Commons, composed for the most part of Presbyterians, declared themselves and the English people rebels, worthy of the punishment of death, and went moreover to cast themselves at the king's feet, with contrite air to beg him to pardon the House and the nation.[6] Dryden is no more delicate than statesmen and legislators. His dedications are as a rule nauseous. He says to the Duchess of Monmouth:

'To receive the blessings and prayers of mankind, you need only be seen together. We are ready to conclude, that you are a pair of angels sent below to

[1] *Essay on Satire*, dedicated to the Earl of Dorset, xiii. 16. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.* 84. [4] Dedication of the *Æneïs*, xiv. 204.
[5] See vol. i. 463. [6] See vol. i. 467.

make virtue amiable in your persons, or to sit to poets when they would pleasantly instruct the age, by drawing goodness in the most perfect and alluring shape of nature. . . . No part of Europe can afford a parallel to your noble Lord in masculine beauty, and in goodliness of shape.'[1]

Elsewhere he says to the Duke of Monmouth:

'You have all the advantages of mind and body, and an illustrious birth, conspiring to render you an extraordinary person. The Achilles and the Rinaldo are present in you, even above their originals; you only want a Homer or a Tasso to make you equal to them. Youth, beauty, and courage (all which you possess in the height of their perfection) are the most desirable gifts of Heaven.'[2]

His Grace did not frown nor hold his nose, and his Grace was right.[3] Another author, Mrs. Aphra Behn, burned a still more ill-savoured incense under the nose of Nell Gwynne: people's nerves were strong in those days, and they breathed freely where others would be suffocated. The Earl of Dorset having written some little songs and satires, Dryden swears that in his way he equalled Shakspeare, and surpassed all the ancients. And these barefaced panegyrics go on imperturbably for a score of pages, the author alternately passing in review the various virtues of his great man, always finding that the last is the finest;[4] after which he receives by way of recompense a purse of gold. Observe that in this Dryden is not more a flunkey than the others. The corporation of Hull, harangued one day by the Duke of Monmouth, made him a present of six broad pieces, which were presented to Monmouth by Marvell, the member for Hull.[5] Modern scruples were not yet born. I can believe that Dryden, with all his prostrations, lacked spirit more than honour.

A second talent, perhaps the first in carnival time, is the art of saying pretty things, and the Restoration was a carnival, about as delicate as a bargee's ball. There are strange songs and more than adventurous prologues in Dryden's plays. His *Marriage à la Mode* opens with these verses sung by a married woman:

'Why should a foolish marriage vow,
Which long ago was made,
Oblige us to each other now,
When passion is decay'd?

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[1] Dedication of *The Indian Emperor*, ii. 261.

[2] Dedication of *Tyrannic Love*, iii. 347.

[3] He also says in the same epistle dedicatory: 'All men will join me in the adoration which I pay you.' To the Earl of Rochester he writes in a letter (xviii. 90): 'I find it is not for me to contend any way with your Lordship, who can write better on the meanest subject than I can on the best. . . . You are above any incense I can give you.' In his dedication of the *Fables* (xi. 195) he compares the Duke of Ormond to Joseph, Ulysses, Lucullus, etc. In his fourth poetical epistle (xi. 20) he compares Lady Castlemaine to Cato.

[4] Dedication of the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 286.

[5] See Andrew Marvell's Works, i. 210.

> We lov'd, and we lov'd as long as we cou'd,
> 'Till our love was lov'd out in us both.
> But our marriage is dead when the pleasure is fled;
> 'Twas pleasure first made it an oath.'

The reader may read the rest for himself in Dryden's plays; it cannot be quoted. Besides, Dryden does not succeed well: his mind is on too solid a basis; his mood is too serious, even reserved, taciturn. As Sir Walter Scott well said, 'his indelicacy was like the forced impudence of a bashful man.'[1] He wished to wear the fine exterior of a Sedley or a Rochester, made himself petulant of set purpose, and squatted clumsily in the filth in which others simply sported. Nothing is more nauseous than studied lewdness, and Dryden studies everything, even pleasantness and politeness. He wrote to Dennis, who had praised him:

> 'They (the commendations) are no more mine when I receive them than the light of the moon can be allowed to be her own, who shines but by the reflexion of her brother.'[2]

He wrote to his cousin, in a diverting narration, these details of a fat woman, with whom he had travelled:

> 'Her weight made the horses travel very heavily; but, to give them a breathing time, she would often stop us, . . . and tell us we were all flesh and blood.'[3]

It seems that these pretty things would then amuse a lady. His letters are made up of heavy official civilities, vigorously hewn compliments, mathematical salutes; his badinage is a dissertation, he props up his trifles with periods. I have found in him beautiful pieces, but never pleasing ones; he cannot even argue with taste. The characters in his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* think themselves still at school, learnedly quote Paterculus, and in Latin too, opposing the definition of the other side, and observing 'that it was only *à genere et fine*, and so not altogether perfect.'[4] In one of his prefaces he says in a professorial tone:

> 'It is charged upon me that I make debauched persons my protagonists, or the chief persons of the drama; and that I make them happy in the conclusion of my play; against the law of comedy, which is to reward virtue, and punish vice.'[5]

Elsewhere he declares: 'It is not that I would explode the use of metaphors from passion, for Longinus thinks them necessary to raise it.' His great essay upon satire swarms with useless or long protracted passages, with the inquiries and comparisons of a commentator. He cannot get rid of the scholar, the logician, the rhetorician, and show the natural man.

But the man of spirit was often manifest; in spite of several falls

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[1] Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 447.
[2] Letter 2, 'to Mr. John Dennis,' xviii. 114.
[3] Letter 29, 'to Mrs. Steward,' xviii. 144.
[4] *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, xv. 302.
[5] Preface to *An Evening's Love*, iii. 225.

and many slips, he shows a mind constantly upright, bending rather from conventionality than from nature, with a dash and afflatus, occupied with grave thoughts, and subjecting his conduct to his convictions. He was converted loyally and by conviction to the Roman Catholic creed, persevered in it after the fall of James II., lost his post of historiographer and poet-laureate, and though poor, burdened with a family, and infirm, refused to dedicate his *Virgil* to King William. He wrote to his sons:

'Dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent: yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature. . . . In the mean time, I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake. . . . You know the profits (of *Virgil*) might have been more; but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them; but I can never repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer.'[1]

One of his sons having been expelled from school, he wrote to the master, Dr. Busby, his own old teacher, with extreme gravity and nobleness, asking without humiliation, disagreeing without giving offence, in a sustained and proud style, which is calculated to please, seeking again his favour, if not as a debt to the father, at least as a gift to the son, and concluding, 'I have done something, so far to conquer my own spirit as to ask it.' He was a good father to his children, as well as liberal, and sometimes even generous, to the tenant of his little estate.[2] He says:

'More libels have been written against me than almost any man now living. . . . I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon, . . . and, being naturally vindictive, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet.'[3]

Insulted by Collier as a corrupter of morals, he endured this coarse reproof, and nobly confessed the faults of his youth:

'I shall say the less of Mr. Collier, because in many things he has taxed me justly; and I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts and expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance.'[4]

There is some wit in what follows:

'He (Collier) is too much given to horseplay in his raillery, and comes to battle like a dictator from the plough. I will not say "the zeal of God's house has eaten him up," but I am sure it has devoured some part of his good manners and civility.'[5]

Such a repentance raises a man; to humble oneself thus, one must be a great man. He was so in mind and in heart, full of solid arguments and individual opinions, above the petty mannerism of rhetoric and

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[1] Letter 23, 'to his sons at Rome,' xviii. 133.
[2] Scott's *Life of Dryden*, i. 449.
[3] *Essay on Satire*, xiii. 80.
[4] Preface to the *Fables*, xi. 238. [5] *Ibid.*

affectations of style, a master of verse, a slave to his idea, with that abundance of thoughts which is the sign of true genius:

'Thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to chuse or to reject, to run them into verses, or to give them the other harmony of prose: I have so long studied and practised both, that they are grown into a habit, and become familiar to me.'[1]

With these powers he entered upon his second career; the English constitution and genius opened it to him.

VII.

'A man,' says La Bruyère, 'born a Frenchman and a Christian finds himself constrained in satire; great subjects are forbidden to him; he essays them sometimes, and then turns aside to small things, which he elevates by the beauty of his genius and his style.' It was not so in England. Great subjects were given up to vehement discussion; politics and religion, like two arenas, invited to boldness and to battle, every talent and every passion. The king, at first popular, had roused opposition by his vices and errors, and bent before public discontent as before the intrigue of parties. It was known that he had sold the interests of England to France; it was believed that he would deliver up the consciences of Protestants to the Papists. The lies of Oates, the murder of the magistrate Godfrey, his corpse solemnly paraded in the streets of London, had inflamed the imagination and prejudices of the people; the judges, blind or intimidated, sent innocent Roman Catholics to the scaffold, and the mob received with insults and curses their protestations of innocence. The king's brother had been excluded from his offices, it was endeavoured to exclude him from the throne. The pulpit, the theatres, the press, the hustings, resounded with discussions and recriminations. The names of Whigs and Tories arose, and the deepest debates of political philosophy were carried on, nursed by sentiments of present and practical interests, embittered by the rancour of old as well as of freshly roused passions. Dryden plunged in; and his poem of *Absalom and Achitophel* was a political pamphlet. 'They who can criticise so weakly,' he says in the preface, 'as to imagine that I have done my worst, may be convinced at their own cost that I can write severely with more ease than I can gently.' A biblical allegory, suited to the taste of the time, hardly concealed the names, and did not hide the men. He describes the tranquil old age and incontestable right of King David;[2] the charm, pliant humour, popularity of his natural son Absalom;[3] the genius and treachery of Achitophel,[4] who stirs up the

[1] Preface to the *Fables*, xi. 209.

[2] Charles II.

[3] The Duke of Monmouth.

[4] The Earl of Shaftesbury:

'Of these the false Achitophel was first,
A name to all succeeding ages curst:

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son against the father, unites the clashing ambitions, and reanimates the conquered factions. There is hardly any wit here; there is no time to be witty in such contests; think of the roused people who listened, men in prison or exile who heard him; fortune, liberty, life was at stake. The thing is to strike the nail on the head and hard, not gracefully. The public must recognise the characters, shout their names as they recognise the portraits, applaud the attacks which are made upon them, rail at them, hurl them from the high rank which they covet. Dryden passes them all in review:

'In the first rank of these did Zimri[1] stand,
A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes;
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes:
So over-violent, or over-civil,
That every man with him was God or devil.

For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit—
Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
A fiery soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity,
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,
He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
Great wits are sure to madness near allied
And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
Else, why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
Punish a body which he could not please,
Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
And all to leave what with his toil he won,
To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son,
Got, while his soul did huddled notions try,
And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
In friendship false, implacable in hate,
Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.'

[1] The Duke of Buckingham.

31232

In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laugh'd himself from Court; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief:
For spite of him, the weight of business fell
On Absalom and wise Achitophel;
Thus wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not faction, but of that was left. . . .
Shimei,[1] whose youth did early promise bring
Of zeal to God and hatred to his King;
Did wisely from expensive sins refrain
And never broke the Sabbath but for gain:
Nor ever was he known an oath to vent,
Or curse, unless against the government.'

Against these attacks their chief Shaftesbury made a stand: when accused of high treason he was declared guiltless by the grand jury, in spite of all the efforts of the court, amidst the applause of a vast multitude; and his partisans caused a medal to be struck, bearing his face, and boldly showing on the reverse the Tower obscured by a cloud. Dryden replied by his poem of the *Medal*, and the violent diatribe overwhelmed the open provocation:

'Oh, could the style that copied every grace
And plow'd such furrows for an eunuch face,
Could it have formed his ever-changing will,
The various piece had tired the graver's skill!
A martial hero first, with early care,
Blown, like a pigmy by the winds, to war;
A beardless chief, a rebel ere a man,
So young his hatred to his Prince began.
Next this, (how wildly will ambition steer!)
A vermin wriggling in the usurper's ear;
Bartering his venal wit for sums of gold,
He cast himself into the saint-like mould,
Groaned, sighed, and prayed, while godliness was gain,
The loudest bag-pipe of the squeaking train.'

The same bitterness envenomed religious controversy. Disputes on dogma, for a moment cast into the shade by debauched and sceptical manners, had broken out again, inflamed by the bigoted Catholicism of the prince, and by the just fears of the nation. The poet who in *Religio Laici* was still an Anglican, though lukewarm and hesitating, drawn on gradually by his absolutist inclinations, had become a convert to Romanism, and in his poem of *The Hind and the Panther* fought for his new creed. 'The nation,' he says in the preface, 'is in too high a ferment for me to expect either fair war or even so much as fair quarter from a reader of the opposite party.' And then, making use

[1] Slingsby Bethel.

of the mediæval allegories, he represents all the heretical sects as beasts of prey, worrying a white hind of heavenly origin; he spares neither coarse comparisons, nor gross sarcasms, nor open objurgations. The argument is close and theological throughout. His hearers were not wits, who cared to see how a dry subject could be adorned, theologians accidentally and for a moment, with mistrust and reserve, like Boileau in his *Amour de Dieu.* They were oppressed men, barely recovered from a secular persecution, attached to their faith by their sufferings, ill at ease under the visible menaces and ominous hatred of their restrained foes. Their poet must be a dialectician and a schoolman; he needs all the sternness of logic; he is immeshed in it, like a recent convert, saturated with the proofs which have separated him from the national faith, and which support him against public reprobation, fertile in distinctions, putting his finger on the weaknesses of an argument, subdividing replies, bringing back his adversary to the question, thorny and unpleasing to a modern reader, but the more praised and loved in his own time. In all English minds there is a basis of gravity and vehemence; hate rises tragic, with a gloomy outbreak, like the breakers in the North Sea. In the midst of his public strife Dryden attacks a private enemy, Shadwell, and overwhelms him with immortal scorn.[1] A great epic style and solemn rhyme gave weight to his sarcasm, and the unlucky rhymester was drawn in a ridiculous triumph on the poetic car, whereon the muse sets the heroes and the gods. Dryden represented the Irishman Mac Flecknoe, an old king of folly, deliberating on the choice of a worthy successor, and choosing Shadwell as an heir to his gabble, a propagator of nonsense, a boastful conqueror of common sense. From all sides, through the streets littered with paper, the nations assembled to look upon the young hero, standing near the throne of his father, his brow surrounded with fogs, the vacant smile of satisfied imbecility floating over his countenance:

> 'The hoary prince in majesty appear'd,
> High on a throne of his own labours rear'd.
> At his right hand our young Ascanius sate,
> Rome's other hope, and pillar of the state;
> His brows thick fogs instead of glories grace,
> And lambent dulness play'd around his face.
> As Hannibal did to the altars come,
> Sworn by his sire, a mortal foe to Rome;
> So Shadwell swore, nor should his vow be vain,
> That he, till death, true dulness would maintain;
> And, in his father's right and realm's defence,
> Ne'er to have peace with wit nor truce with sense.
> The king himself the sacred unction made,
> As king by office and as priest by trade.
> In his sinister hand, instead of ball,
> He placed a mighty mug of potent ale.'

[1] Mac Flecknoe.

His father blesses him:

"'"Heavens bless my son! from Ireland let him reign
To far Barbadoes on the western main;
Of his dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his father's be his throne;
Beyond Love's Kingdom let him stretch his pen!"
He paused, and all the people cried Amen.
Then thus continued he: "My son, advance
Still in new impudence, new ignorance.
Success let others teach, learn thou from me,
Pangs without birth and fruitless industry.
Let Virtuosos in five years be writ;
Yet not one thought accuse thy toil of wit. . . .
Let them be all by thy own model made
Of dulness and desire no foreign aid,
That they to future ages may be known,
Not copies drawn, but issue of thy own:
Nay, let thy men of wit too be the same,
All full of thee and differing but in name. . . .
Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep;
Thy tragic Muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep.
With whate'er gall thou setst thyself to write,
Thy inoffensive satires never bite;
In thy felonious heart though venom lies,
It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dies.
Thy genius calls thee not to purchase fame
In keen Iambics, but mild Anagram.
Leave writing plays, and choose for thy command
Some peaceful province in Acrostic land.
There thou may'st wings display, and altars raise,
And torture one poor word ten thousand ways;
Or, if thou wouldst thy different talents suit,
Set thy own songs, and sing them to thy lute."
He said, but his last words were scarcely heard,
For Bruce and Longville had a trap prepared,
And down they sent the yet declaiming bard.
Sinking he left his drugget robe behind,
Borne upwards by a subterranean wind.
The mantle fell to the young prophet's part,
With double portion of his father's art.'

Thus the insulting masquerade goes on, not studied and polished like Boileau's *Lutrin*, but rude and pompous, inspired by a coarse and poetical afflatus, as you may see a great ship enter the muddy Thames, with spread canvas, cleaving the waters.

VIII.

In these three poems, the art of writing, the mark and the source of classical literature, appeared for the first time. A new spirit was born and renewed this art, like everything else; thenceforth, and for a cen-

tury to come, ideas sprang up and fell into their place after another law than that which had hitherto shaped them. Under Spenser and Shakspeare, living words, like cries or music, betrayed the internal imagination which gave them forth. A kind of vision possessed the artist; landscapes and events were unfolded in his mind as in nature; he concentrated in a glance all the details and all the forces which make up a being, and this image acted and was developed within him like the external object; he imitated his characters; he heard their words; he found it easier to represent them with every pulsation than to relate or explain their feelings; he did not judge, he saw; he was an involuntary actor and mimic; drama was his natural work, because in it the characters speak, and not the author. Then this complex and imitative conception changes colour and is decomposed: man sees things no more at a glance, but in detail; he walks leisurely round them, turning his light upon all their parts in succession. The fire which revealed them by a single illumination is extinguished; he observes qualities, marks aspects, classifies groups of actions, judges and reasons. Words, before animated, and as it were swelling with sap, are withered and dried; they become abstractions; they cease to produce in him figures and landscapes; they only set in motion the relics of enfeebled passions; they barely shed a few flickering beams on the uniform texture of his dulled conception; they become exact, almost scientific, like numbers, and like numbers they are arranged in a series, allied by proportions,—the first, more simple, leading up to the next, more composite,—all in the same order, so that the mind which enters upon a track, finds it level, and is never obliged to quit it. Thenceforth a new career is opened; man has the whole world resubjected to his thought; the change in his thoughts has changed all the aspects, and everything assumes a new form in his metamorphosed mind. His task is to explain and to prove; this, in short, is the classical style, and this is the style of Dryden.

He develops, defines, concludes; he declares his thought, then takes it up again, that his reader may receive it prepared, and having received, may retain it. He bounds it with exact terms justified by the dictionary, with simple constructions justified by grammar, that the reader may have at every step a method of verification and a source of clearness. He contrasts ideas with ideas, phrases with phrases, that the reader, guided by the contrast, may not deviate from the route marked out for him. You may imagine the possible beauty of such a work. This poesy is but a stronger prose. Closer ideas, more marked contrasts, bolder images, only add weight to the argument. Metre and rhyme transform the judgments into sentences. The mind, held on the stretch by the rhythm, studies itself more, and by means of reflection arrives at a noble conclusion. The judgments are embossed in abbreviative images, or symmetrical lines, which give them the solidity and popular form of a dogma. General truths acquire the definite form

which transmits them to posterity, and propagates them in the human race. Such is the merit of these poems; they please by their good expressions.[1] In a full and solid web stand out cleverly knotted or sparkling threads. Here Dryden has gathered in one line a long argument; there a happy metaphor has opened up a new perspective under the principal idea;[2] further on, two similar words, united together, have struck the mind with an unforeseen and cogent proof;[3] elsewhere a hidden comparison has thrown a tinge of glory or shame on the person who least expected it. These are all artifices or successes of a calculated style, which chains the attention, and leaves the mind persuaded or convinced.

IX.

In truth, there is scarcely any other literary merit. If Dryden is a skilled politician, a trained controversialist, well armed with arguments, knowing all the ins and outs of discussion, versed in the history of men and parties, this pamphleteering aptitude, practical and English, confines him to the low region of everyday and personal combats, far from the lofty philosophy and speculative freedom which give endurance and greatness to the classical style of his French contemporaries. In this age, in England, all discussion was fundamentally narrow. Except the terrible Hobbes, they all lack grand originality. Dryden, like the rest, is confined to the arguments and insults of sect and fashion. Their ideas were as small as their hatred was strong; no general doctrine opened up beyond the tumult of the strife a poetical vista; texts, traditions, a sad train of rigid reasoning, such were their arms; prejudice and passion swayed both parties. This is why the subject-matter fell below the art of writing. Dryden had no personal philosophy to de-

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[1] 'Strong were our sires, and as they fought they writ,
Conquering with force of arms and dint of wit:
Theirs was the giant race, before the flood.
And thus, when Charles return'd, our empire stood.
Like Janus, he the stubborn soil manured,
With rules of husbandry the rankness cured;
Tamed as to manners, when the stage was rude,
And boisterous English wit with art endued. . . .
But what we gain'd in skill we lost in strength,
Our builders were with want of genius curst;
The second temple was not like the first.'
Epistle 12 *to Congreve*, xi. 59.

[2] 'Held up the buckler of the people's cause
Against the crown, and skulk'd against the laws. . . .
Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet, sprung from high, is of celestial seed!'
Absalom and Achitophel, Part i.

[3] 'Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
Turn rebel, and run popularly mad?'

velop; he does but versify themes given to him by others. In this sterility art soon is reduced to the clothing of foreign ideas, and the writer becomes an antiquarian or a translator. In fact, the greatest part of Dryden's poems are imitations, adaptations, or copies. He translated Persius, Virgil, part of Horace, Theocritus, Juvenal, Lucretius, and Homer, and put into modern English several tales of Boccacio and Chaucer. These translations then appeared to be as great works as original compositions. When he took the *Æneid* in hand, the nation, as Johnson tells us, appeared to think its honour interested in the issue. Addison furnished him with the arguments of every book, and an essay on the *Georgics;* others supplied him with additions and notes; great lords vied with one another in offering him hospitality; subscriptions flowed in. They said that the English Virgil was to give England the Virgil of Rome. This work was long considered his highest glory. Even so at Rome, under Cicero, in the early dearth of national poetry, the translators of Greek works were as highly praised as the original authors.

This sterility of invention alters or depresses the taste. For taste is an instinctive system, and leads us by internal maxims, which we ignore. The mind, guided by it, perceives connections, shuns discordances, enjoys or suffers, chooses or rejects, according to general conceptions which master it, but are not visible. These removed, we see the tact, which they engendered, disappear; the writer is clumsy, because philosophy fails him. Such is the imperfection of the stories handled by Dryden, from Boccacio and Chaucer. Dryden does not see that fairy tales or tales of chivalry only suit a poetry in its infancy; that ingenious subjects require an artless style; that the talk of Renard and Chanticleer, the adventures of Palamon and Arcite, the transformations, tournaments, apparitions, need the astonished carelessness and the graceful gossip of old Chaucer. Vigorous periods, reflective antitheses, here oppress these amiable ghosts; classical phrases embarrass them in their too stringent embrace; they are lost to our sight; to find them again, we must go to their first parent, quit the too harsh light of a learned and manly age; we cannot pursue them fairly except in their first style in the dawn of credulous thought, under the mist which plays about their vague forms, with all the blushes and smile of morning. Moreover, when Dryden comes on the scene, he crushes the delicacies of his master, hauling in tirades or reasonings, blotting out sincere and self-abandoning tenderness. What a difference between his account of Arcite's death and Chaucer's! How wretched are all his fine words, his gallantry, his symmetrical phrases, his cold regrets, compared to the cries of sorrow, the true outpouring, the deep love in Chaucer! But the worst fault is that almost everywhere he is a copyist, and retains the faults like a literal translator, with eyes glued on the work, powerless to comprehend and recast it, more a rhymester than a poet. When La Fontaine put Æsop or Boccacio into

verse, he breathed a new spirit into them; he took their matter only: the new soul, which constitutes the value of his work, is his, and only his; and this soul befits the work. In place of the Ciceronian periods of Boccacio, we find slim, little lines, full of delicate raillery, dainty voluptuousness, feigned frankness, which relish the forbidden fruit because it is fruit, and because it is forbidden. The tragic departs, the relics of the middle-ages are a thousand leagues away; there remains nothing but the jeering gaiety, Gallic and racy, as of a critic and an epicurean. In Dryden, incongruities abound; and our author is so little shocked by them, that he imports them elsewhere, in his theological poems, representing the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, as a hind, and the heresies by various animals, who dispute at as great length and as learnedly as Oxford graduates.[1] I like him no better in his Epistles; as a rule, they are but flatteries, almost always awkward, often mythological, interspersed with somewhat vulgar sentences. 'I have studied Horace,' he says,[2] 'and hope the style of his Epistles is not ill imitated here.' Do not imagine it to be true. Horace's Epistles, though in verse, are genuine letters, brisk, unequal in movement, always unstudied, natural. Nothing is further from Dryden than this original and sociable spirit, philosophical and lewd,[3] the most refined and the most nervous of epicureans, a kinsman (at eighteen centuries' distance) of Alfred de Musset and Voltaire. Like Horace, an author must be a thinker and a man of the world to write agreeable morality, and Dryden was no more than his contemporaries a thinker or a man of the world.

But other no less English characteristics sustain him. Suddenly, in the midst of the yawns which these Epistles excited, our eyes are arrested. A true accent, new ideas, are brought out. Dryden, writing to his cousin, a country gentleman, has lighted on an English original subject. He depicts the life of a rural squire, the referee of his neighbours, who shuns lawsuits and town doctors, who keeps himself in health by hunting and exercise. Here is his portrait:

> 'How bless'd is he, who leads a country life,
> Unvex'd with anxious cares, and void of strife! . . .
> With crowds attended of your ancient race,
> You seek the champaign sports, or sylvan chase;
> With well-breathed beagles you surround the wood,
> Even then industrious of the common good;
> And often have you brought the wily fox
> To suffer for the firstlings of the flocks;
> Chased even amid the folds, and made to bleed,
> Like felons, where they did the murderous deed.

[1] Though Huguenots contemn our ordination, succession, ministerial vocation, etc. (*The Hind and the Panther*, Part ii. v. 139), such are the harsh words we often find in his books.

[2] Preface to the *Religio Laici*.

[3] What Augustus says about Horace is charming, but cannot be quoted, even in Latin.

This fiery game your active youth maintain'd ;
Not yet by years extinguish'd though restrain'd : . . .
A patriot both the king and country serves ;
Prerogative and privilege preserves :
Of each our laws the certain limit show ;
One must not ebb, nor t'other overflow :
Betwixt the prince and parliament we stand,
The barriers of the state on either hand ;
May neither overflow, for then they drown the land.
When both are full, they feed our bless'd abode ;
Like those that water'd once the paradise of God.
Some overpoise of sway, by turns, they share ;
In peace the people, and the prince in war :
Consuls of moderate power in calms were made ;
When the Gauls came, one sole dictator sway'd.
Patriots, in peace, assert the people's right,
With noble stubbornness resisting might ;
No lawless mandates from the court receive,
Nor lend by force, but in a body give.' [1]

This serious converse shows a political mind, fed on the spectacle of affairs, having in the matter of public and practical debates the superiority which the French have in speculative discussions and social conversation. So, amidst the dryness of polemics break forth sudden splendours, a poetic fount, a prayer from the heart's depths ; the English well of concentrated passion is on a sudden opened again with a flow and a dash which Dryden does not elsewhere exhibit :

'Dim as the borrow'd beams of moon and stars
To lonely, weary, wand'ring travellers,
Is reason to the soul : and as on high
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
Not light us here ; so Reason's glimm'ring ray
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
But guide us upward to a better day.
And as those nightly tapers disappear
When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere,
So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight,
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.' [2]

'But, gracious God ! how well dost thou provide
For erring judgments an unerring guide !
Thy throne is darkness in th' abyss of light,
A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
O teach me to believe Thee thus conceal'd,
And search no farther than Thy self reveal'd ;
But her alone for my director take,
Whom Thou hast promised never to forsake !
My thoughtless youth was wing'd with vain desires ;
My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,

[1] Epistle 15, xi. 75.

[2] Beginning of *Religio Laici*.

Follow'd false lights ; and when their glimpse was gone,
My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
Such was I, such by nature still I am ;
Be Thine the glory and be mine the shame !
Good life be now my task ; my doubts are done.'[1]

Such is the poetry of these serious minds. After having strayed in the debaucheries and pomps of the Restoration, Dryden found his way to the grave emotions of inner life ; though a Romanist, he felt like a Protestant the wretchedness of man and the presence of grace : he was capable of enthusiasm. Here and there a manly and effective verse discloses, in the midst of his reasonings, the power of conception and the inspiration of desire. When the tragic is met with, he takes to it as to his own domain ; at need, he deals in the horrible. He has described the infernal chase, and the torture of the young girl worried by dogs, with the savage energy of Milton.[2] As a contrast, he loved nature : this taste always endures in England ; the sombre, reflective passions are unstrung in the wide peace and harmony of the fields. Landscapes are to be met with amidst theological disputation :

'New blossoms flourish and new flowers arise,
As God had been abroad, and walking there
Had left his footsteps and reformed the year.
The sunny hills from far were seen to glow
With glittering beams, and in the meads below
The burnished brooks appeared with liquid gold to flow.
As last they heard the foolish Cuckoo sing,
Whose note proclaimed the holy-day of spring.'[3]

Under his regular versification the artist's soul is brought to light ;[4] though contracted by habits of classical argument, though stiffened by controversy and polemics, though unable to create souls or to depict artless and delicate sentiments, he is a genuine poet : he is troubled, raised by beautiful sounds and forms ; he writes boldly under the pressure of vehement ideas ; he surrounds himself willingly with splendid images ; he is moved by the buzzing of their swarms, the glitter of their splendours ; he is, when he wishes it, a musician and a painter ; he writes stirring airs, which shake all the senses, even if they do not sink deep into the heart. Such is his *Alexander's Feast*, an ode in honour of St. Cecilia's day, an admirable trumpet-blast, in which metre and sound impress upon the nerves the emotions of the mind, a masterpiece of rapture and of art, which Victor Hugo alone has come up

[1] *The Hind and the Panther*, Part i. *v.* 64–75. [2] *Theodore and Honoria*, xi.
[3] *The Hind and the Panther*, Part iii. *v.* 553–560.
[4] 'For her the weeping heavens become serene,
For her the ground is clad in cheerful green,
For her the nightingales are taught to sing,
And nature for her has delayed the spring.'
These charming verses on the Duchess of York remind one of those of La Fontaine on the Princess of Conti.

to.[1] Alexander is on his throne in the palace of Persepolis; the lovely Thais sate by his side; before him, in a vast hall, his glorious captains. And Timotheus sings:

'The praise of Bacchus, then, the sweet musician sung;
Of Bacchus ever fair, and ever young.
The jolly God in triumph comes;
Sound the trumpets, beat the drums;
Flush'd with a purple grace,
He shews his honest face.
Now, give the hautboys breath; he comes, he comes.
Bacchus, ever fair and young,
Drinking joys did first ordain;
Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
Drinking is the soldier's pleasure;
Rich the treasure,
Sweet the pleasure;
Sweet is pleasure after pain.'

And at the stirring sounds the king is troubled; his cheeks are glowing; his battles return to his memory; he defies heaven and earth. Then a sad song depresses him. Timotheus mourns the death of the betrayed Darius. Then a tender song softens him; Timotheus lauds the dazzling beauty of Thais. Suddenly he strikes the lyre again:

'A louder yet, and yet a louder strain.
Break his bands of sleep asunder,
And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.
Hark, hark! the horrid sound
Has raised up his head;
As awaked from the dead,
And amazed, he stares around.
Revenge, revenge! Timotheus cries,
See the furies arise;
See the snakes, that they rear,
How they hiss in their hair!
And the sparkles that flash from their eyes!
Behold a ghastly band,
Each a torch in his hand!
Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,
And unburied remain
Inglorious on the plain:
Give the vengeance due
To the valiant crew.
Behold how they toss their torches on high,
How they point to the Persian abodes,
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.—
The princes applaud, with a furious joy.
And the king seized a flambeau with zeal to destroy;
Thais led the way,
To light him to his prey,
And, like another Helen, fired another Troy.'

[1] For instance, in the *Chant du Cirque.*

Thus already music softened, exalted, mastered men; Dryden's verses acquire power in describing it.

X.

This was one of his last works; brilliant and poetical, it was born amidst the greatest sadness. The king for whom he had written was deposed and in exile; the religion which he had embraced was despised and oppressed; a Roman Catholic and a royalist, he was bound to a conquered party, which the nation resentfully and mistrustfully considered as the natural enemy of liberty and reason. He had lost the two places which were his support; he lived wretchedly, burdened with a family, obliged to support his son abroad; treated as a hireling by a coarse publisher, forced to ask him for money to pay for a watch which he could not get on credit, beseeching Lord Bolingbroke to protect him against Tonson's insults, rated by this shopkeeper when the promised page was not finished on the stated day. His enemies persecuted him with pamphlets; the Puritan Collier lashed his comedies unfeelingly; he was damned without pity, but conscientiously. He had long been in ill health, crippled, constrained to write much, reduced to exaggerate flattery in order to earn from the great the indispensable money which the publishers would not give him:[1]

'What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write; and my judges, if they are not very equitable, already prejudiced against me, by the lying character which has been given them of my morals.'[2]

Although well meant for his own part, he knew that his conduct had not always been worthy, and that all his writings would not endure. Born between two epochs, he had oscillated between two forms of life and two forms of thought, having reached the perfection of neither, having kept the faults of both; having found in surrounding manners no support worthy of his character, and in surrounding ideas no subject worthy of his talent. If he had founded criticism and good style, this criticism had only found scope in pedantic treatises or unconnected prefaces; this good style continued out of the track in inflated tragedies, dispersed over multiplied translations, scattered in occasional pieces, in odes written to order, in party poems, meeting only here and there an afflatus capable of employing it, and a subject capable of sustaining it. What efforts for such a moderate result! For a long time gravel and gout left him no peace; erysipelas seized one of his legs. In April 1700 he tried to go out; 'a slight inflammation in one of his toes became, from neglect, a gangrene;' the doctor would have tried amputation, but he decided that what remained him of health and happiness was not worth the pain. He died at the age of sixty-nine.

[1] He was paid two hundred and fifty guineas for ten thousand lines.

[2] Postscript of Virgil's Works, as translated by Dryden, xv. p. 187.

CHAPTER III.

The Revolution.

I. The moral revolution of the seventeenth century—It advances side by side with the political revolution.

II. Brutality of the people — Gin-Riots—Corruption of the great — Political manners—Treasons under William III. and Anne—Morality under Walpole and Bute—Private manners—The roysterers—The atheists—Chesterfield's *Letters*—His polish and morality—Gay's *Beggars' Opera*—His elegance and satire.

III. Principles of civilisation in France and England—Conversation in France; how it ends in a revolution—Moral sense in England; how it ends in a reformation.

IV. Religion—Visible signs—Its profound sentiment—Religion popular—Lifelike—Arians—Methodists.

V. The pulpit—Mediocrity and efficacy of preaching—Tillotson—His heaviness and solidity — Barrow—His abundance and minuteness — South — His harshness and energy—Comparison of French and English preachers.

VI. Theology—Comparison of the French and English apology for religion—Sherlock, Stillingfleet, Clarke—Theology not speculative but moral—The greatest minds are on the side of Christianity—Impotence of speculative philosophy—Berkeley, Newton, Locke, Hume, Reid—Development of moral philosophy—Smith, Pine, Hutcheson.

VII. The Constitution—Sentiment of right—Locke's *Essay on Government*—Theory of personal right accepted—Maintained by temperament, pride, and interest—Theory of personal right applied—Put in practice by elections, the press, the tribunals.

VIII. Parliamentary eloquence — Its energy and harshness — Lord Chatham—Junius—Fox—Sheridan—Pitt—Burke.

IX. Issue of the century's labours—Economic and moral transformation—Comparison of Reynolds' and Lely's portraits—Contrary doctrines and tendencies in France and England — Revolutionists and Conservatives — Judgment of Burke and the English people on the French Revolution.

I.

WITH the constitution of 1688 a new spirit appears in England. Slowly, gradually, the moral revolution accompanies the social: man changes with the state, in the same sense and for the same causes; character moulds itself to the situation; and little by little, in manners and in literature, we trace the empire of a serious, reflective, moral spirit, capable of discipline and independence, which can alone maintain and give effect to a constitution.

II.

This was not achieved without difficulty, and at first sight it seems as though England had gained nothing by this revolution of which she is so proud. The aspect of things under William, Anne, and the first two Georges, is repulsive. We are tempted to agree in Swift's judgment, to say that if he has depicted a Yahoo, it is because he has seen him; naked or drawn in his carriage, the Yahoo is not beautiful. We see but corruption in high places, brutality in low, a band of intriguers leading a mob of brutes. The human beast, inflamed by political passions, gives vent to cries and violence, burns Admiral Byng in effigy, demands his death, would destroy his house and park, sways from party to party, seems with its blind force ready to annihilate civil society. When Dr. Sacheverell was tried, the butcher boys, crossing-sweepers, chimney-sweepers, costermongers, drabs, the entire scum, conceiving the Church to be in danger, follow him with yells of rage and enthusiasm, and in the evening set to work to burn and pillage the dissenters' chapels. When Lord Bute, in defiance of public opinion, was set up in Pitt's place, he was assailed with stones, and was obliged to surround his carriage with a strong guard. At every political crisis was heard a riotous growl, were seen disorder, blows, broken heads. It was worse when the people's own interests were at stake. Gin had been discovered in 1684, and about half a century later England consumed seven millions of gallons.[1] The tavernkeepers on their signboards invited people to come and get drunk for a penny; for twopence they might get dead drunk; no charge for straw; the landlord dragged those who succumbed into a cellar, where they slept off their carouse. You could not walk London streets without meeting wretches, incapable of motion or thought, lying in the kennel, whom the care of the passers-by alone could prevent from being smothered in mud, or crushed by carriage-wheels. A tax was imposed to stop this madness: it was in vain; the judges dared not condemn, the informers were assassinated. The House gave way, and Walpole, finding himself threatened with a riot, withdrew his law.[2] All these bewigged and ermined lawyers, these bishops in lace, these embroidered and gold-bedizened lords, this fine government so cleverly balanced, was carried on the back of a vast and formidable brute, which as a rule would tramp peacefully though growlingly on, but which on a sudden, for a mere whim, could shake and crush it. It was clearly seen in 1780, during the riots of Lord George Gordon. Without reason or command, at the cry of No Popery the excited mob demolished the prisons, let loose the criminals, abused the Peers, and was for three

[1] 1742, Report of Lord Lonsdale.

[2] In the present inflamed temper of the people, the Act could not be carried into execution without an armed force.—*Speech of Sir Robert Walpole.*

days master of the town, burning, pillaging, and glutting itself. Barrels of gin were staved in and made rivers in the streets. Children and women on their knees drank themselves to death. Some became mad, others fell down besotted, and the burning and falling houses ended by destroying or burying them. Eleven years later, at Birmingham, the people sacked and gutted the houses of the Liberals and Dissenters, and were found next day in heaps, dead drunk in the roads and ditches. The riot of instinct in this over-strong and well-fed race is perilous. The popular bull dashed headlong at the first red rag which it thought it saw.

The higher ranks were even less estimable than the lower. If there has been no more beneficial revolution than that of 1688, there has been none that was launched or supported by dirtier means. Treason was everywhere, not simple, but double and triple. Under William and Anne, admirals, ministers, councillors, favourites of the antechamber, corresponded and conspired with the same Stuarts whom they had sold, only to sell them again, with a complication of bargains, each destroying the last, and a complication of perjuries, each surpassing the last, until in the end no one knew whose or who he was. The greatest general of the age, the Duke of Marlborough, is one of the basest rogues in history, supported by his mistresses, a niggard user of the pay which he received from the State, systematically plundering his soldiers, trafficking in political secrets, a traitor to James, to William, to England, ready to risk his life to avoid changing a pair of wet boots, and to let an expedition of English soldiers fall into a French ambush. After him, Bolingbroke, a sceptic and cynic, minister in turn to Queen and Pretender, disloyal alike to both, a trafficker in consciences, marriages, and promises, who had squandered his talent in debauch and intrigues, to end in disgrace, impotence, and scorn.[1] Then Walpole was compelled to resign, after having been prime minister for twenty years, and who used to boast that 'every man had his price.'[2] Montesquieu wrote in 1729:[3]

'There are Scotch members who have only two hundred pounds for their vote, and sell it at this price. Englishmen are no longer worthy of their liberty. They sell it to the king; and if the king would sell it back to them, they would sell it him again.'

We must read in Bubb Doddington's *Diary* the candid fashion and pretty contrivances of this great traffic. So Dr. King states:

'He (Walpole) wanted to carry a question in the House of Commons, to which he knew there would be great opposition. . . . As he was passing through the Court of Requests, he met a member of the contrary party, whose avarice he imagined would not reject a large bribe. He took him aside, and said, "Such

[1] See Walpole's terrible speech against him, 1734.

[2] See, for the truth of this statement, *Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, 2 vols., ed. E. Warburton, 1851, i. 381, note.

[3] Notes during a journey in England made in 1729 with Lord Chesterfield.

a question comes on this day; give me your vote, and here is a bank-bill of two thousand pounds," which he put into his hands. The member made him this answer: "Sir Robert, you have lately served some of my particular friends; and when my wife was last at court, the King was very gracious to her, which must have happened at your instance. I should therefore think myself very ungrateful (putting the bank-bill into his pocket) if I were to refuse the favour you are now pleased to ask me."'[1]

This is how a man of taste did business. Corruption was so fixed in public manners and in politics, that after the fall of Walpole, Lord Bute, who had denounced him, was obliged to practise and increase it. His colleague Fox changed the pay-office into a market, haggled about their price with hundreds of members, distributed in one morning twenty-five thousand pounds. Votes were only to be had for cash down, and yet at an important crisis these mercenaries would threaten to go over to the enemy, struck for wages, and demanded more. Nor did the leaders miss their own share. They sold themselves for, or paid themselves with, titles, dignities, sinecures. In order to get a place vacant, they gave the holder a pension of two, three, five, and even seven thousand a year. Pitt, the most upright, the leader of those who were called patriots, passed and retracted his word, attacked or defended Walpole, proposed war or peace, all to become or to continue a minister. Fox, his rival, was a sort of shameless sink. The Duke of Newcastle, 'whose name was perfidy,' a kind of living caricature, the most clumsy, ignorant, ridiculed and despised of the aristocracy, was in the Cabinet for thirty years and premier for ten years, by virtue of his connections, his wealth, of the elections which he managed, and the places in his gift. The fall of the Stuarts put the government into the hands of a few great families which, by means of rotten boroughs, bought members and high-sounding speeches, oppressed the king, moulded the passions of the mob, intrigued, lied, wrangled, and tried to swindle each other out of power.

Private manners were as lovely as public. As a rule, the reigning king detested his son; this son got into debt, demanded of Parliament an increase of allowance, allied himself with his father's enemies. George I. kept his wife in prison thirty-two years, and got drunk every night with his two plain mistresses. George II., who loved his wife, took mistresses to keep up appearances, rejoiced at his son's death, upset his father's will. His eldest son cheated at cards,[2] and one day at Kensington, having borrowed five thousand pounds from Bubb Doddington, said, when he saw him from the window: 'That man is reckoned one of the most sensible men in England, yet with all his parts I have just nicked him out of five thousand pounds.'[3] George IV. was a sort of coachman, gamester, scandalous roysterer, unprincipled

[1] Dr. W. King, *Political and Literary Anecdotes of his own Times*, 1818, 27.

[2] Frederick died 1751. *Memoirs of Horace Walpole*, i. 262.

[3] Walpole's *Memoirs of George II.*, ed. Lord Holland, 3 vols., 2d ed., 1847, i. 77.

betting-man, whose proceedings all but got him excluded from the Jockey Club. The only upright man was George III., a poor half-witted dullard, who went mad, and whom his mother had kept in his youth, as though in a cloister. She gave as her reason the universal corruption of men of quality. 'The young men,' she said, 'were all rakes; the young women made love, instead of waiting till it was made to them.' In fact, vice was in fashion, not delicate vice as in France. 'Money,' wrote Montesquieu, 'is here esteemed above everything, honour and virtue not much. An Englishman must have a good dinner, a woman, and money. As he does not go much in society, and limits himself to this, so, as soon as his fortune is gone, and he can no longer have these things, he commits suicide or turns thief.' The young men had a superabundance of coarse energy, which made them mistake brutality for pleasure. The most celebrated called themselves Mohawks, and tyrannised over London by night. They stopped people and made them dance by pricking their legs with their swords; sometimes they would put a woman in a tub, and set her rolling down a hill; others would place her on her head, with her feet in the air; some would flatten the nose of the wretch whom they had caught, and press his eyes out of their sockets. Swift, the comic writers, the novelists, have painted the baseness of this gross debauchery, craving for riot, living in drunkenness, revelling in obscenity, issuing in cruelty, ending by irreligion and atheism.[1] This violent and excessive mood requires to occupy itself proudly and daringly in the destruction of what men respect, and what institutions protect. These men attack the clergy by the same instinct which leads them to beat the watch. Collins, Tindal, Bolingbroke, are their doctors; the corruption of manners, the wont of treason, the elbowing of sects, the freedom of speech, the progress of sciences, and the fermentation of ideas, seemed as if they would dissolve Christianity. 'There is no religion in England,' said Montesquieu. 'Four or five in the House of Commons go to mass or to the parliamentary sermon. . . . If any one speaks of religion, everybody begins to laugh. A man happening to say, "I believe this like an article of faith," everybody burst out laughing.' In fact, the phrase was provincial, and smacked of antiquity. The main thing was to be fashionable, and it is amusing to see from Lord Chesterfield in what this fashion consisted. Of justice and honour he only speaks transiently, and for form's sake. Before all, he says to his son, 'have manners, good breeding, and the graces.' He insists upon it in every letter, with a fulness and force of illustration which form an odd contrast:

'Mon cher ami, comment vont les grâces, les manières, les agrémens, et tous ces petits riens si nécessaires pour rendre un homme aimable? Les prenez-vous? y faites vous des progrès? . . . A propos, on m'assure que Madame de Blot sans avoir des traits, est jolie comme un cœur, et que nonobstant cela, elle s'en est

[1] Character of Birton in Voltaire's *Jenny*.

tenue jusqu'ici scrupuleusement à son mari, quoi qu'il y ait déjà plus d'un an qu'elle est mariée. Elle n'y pense pas.[1] . . . It seems ridiculous to tell you, but it is most certainly true, that your dancing-master is at this time the man in all Europe of the greatest importance to you.[2] . . . In your person you must be accurately clean ; and your teeth, hands, and nails should be superlatively so. . . . Upon no account whatever put your fingers in your nose or ears.[3] What says Madame Dupin to you ? For an attachment I should prefer her to la petite Blot.[4] . . . Pleasing women may in time be of service to you. They often please and govern others.'[5]

And he quotes to him as examples, Bolingbroke and Marlborough, the two worst roués of the age. Thus speaks a serious man, an umpire of education and taste.[6] He wishes to polish his son, to give him a French air, to add to solid diplomatic knowledge and large views of ambition an engaging, lively, and frivolous manner. This outward polish, which at Paris is of the true colour, is here but a shocking veneer. This transplanted politeness is a lie, this vivacity is senselessness, this worldly education seems fitted only to make actors and rogues.

So thought Gay in his *Beggars' Opera*, and the polished society applauded with *furore* the portrait which he drew of it. Sixty-three consecutive nights the piece ran amidst a tempest of laughter ; the ladies had the songs written on their fans, and the principal actress, it is said, married a duke. What a satire ! Thieves infested London, so that in 1728 the queen herself was almost robbed ; they formed bands, with officers, a treasury, and multiplied, though every six weeks they were sent by the cartload to the gallows. Such was the society which Gay put on the stage. In his opinion, it was as good as the higher society ; it was hard to discriminate : the manners, wit, conduct, morality in both were alike.

'Through the whole piece you may observe such a similitude of manners in high and low life, that it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable vices) the fine gentlemen imitate the gentlemen of the road, or the gentlemen of the road the fine gentlemen.'[7]

Wherein, for example, is Peachum different from a great minister ? Like him, he is a leader of a gang of thieves ; like him, he has a register

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[1] The original letter is in French. Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, ed. Mahon, 4 vols., 1845 ; ii., April 15, 1751, p. 127.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. Jan. 3, 1751, p. 72.

[3] *Ibid.* ii. Nov. 12, 1750, p. 57.

[4] *Ibid.* ii. May 16, 1751, p. 146.

[5] *Ibid.* ii. Jan. 21, 1751, p. 81.

[6] 'They (the English) are commonly twenty years old before they have spoken to anybody above their schoolmaster and the Fellows of their college. If they happen to have learning, it is only Greek and Latin, but not one word of modern history or modern languages. Thus prepared, they go abroad, as they call it ; but, in truth, they stay at home all that while : for, being very awkward, confoundedly ashamed, and not speaking the languages, they go into no foreign company, at least none good ; but dine and sup with one another only at the tavern.' *Ibid.* i., May 10, O. S., 1748, p. 136. 'I could wish you would ask him (Mr. Burrish) for some letters to young fellows of pleasure or fashionable coquettes, that you may be *dans l'honnête débauche de Munich*.'—*Ibid.* ii. Oct. 3, 1753, p. 331.

[7] Speech of the Beggar in the Epilogue of the *Beggars' Opera*.

for thefts; like him, he receives money with both hands; like him, he contrives to have his friends caught and hung when they trouble him; he uses, like him, parliamentary language and classical comparisons; he has, like him, gravity, steadiness, and is eloquently indignant when his honour is suspected. You will answer, perhaps, that he quarrels with a comrade about the profits, and stabs him? But lately, Sir Robert Walpole and Lord Townsend had taken each other by the collar on a similar question. Listen to what Mrs. Peachum says of her daughter:

'Love him (Macheath) worse and worse! I thought the girl had been better bred.'[1]

The daughter observes:

'A woman knows how to be mercenary though she has never been in a court or at an assembly.'[2]

And the father remarks:

'My daughter to me should be, like a court lady to a minister of state, a key to the whole gang.'[3]

As to Macheath, he is a fit son-in-law for such a politician. If less brilliant in council than in action, that only suits his age. Point out a young and noble officer who has a better address, or performs finer actions. He is a highwayman, that is his bravery; he shares his booty with his friends, that is his generosity:

'You see, gentlemen, I am not a mere court-friend, who professes everything and will do nothing. . . . But we, gentlemen, have still honour enough to break through the corruptions of the world.'[4]

For the rest, he is gallant; he has half a dozen wives, a dozen children; he frequents stews, he is amiable towards the beauties whom he meets, he is easy in manners, he makes elegant bows to every one, he pays compliments to all:

'Mistress Slammekin! as careless and genteel as ever! all you fine ladies, who know your own beauty affect undress . . . If any of the ladies chuse gin, I hope they will be so free as to call for it.—Indeed, sir, I never drink strong waters, but when I have the colic.—Just the excuse of the fine ladies! why, a lady of quality is never without the colic.'[5]

Is it not the genuine tone of good company? And would you doubt that Macheath is a man of quality when you learn that he has deserved to be hung, and is not? Everything yields to such a proof. If, however, you wish for another, he would add that,

'As to conscience and nasty morals, I have as few drawbacks upon my pleasures as any man of quality in England; in those I am not at least vulgar.'[6]

After such a speech one must give in. Do not bring up the foulness of these manners; you see that there is nothing repulsive in them. These interiors of prisons and stews, these gambling-houses, this whiff of

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[1] Gay's *Plays*, 1772; *The Beggars' Opera*, i. 1. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 2. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 1.
[6] I cannot find these lines in the edition I have consulted.—Tr.

gin, this pander-traffic, and these pickpockets' calculations, by no means disgust the ladies, who applaud from the boxes. They sing the songs of Polly; their nerves shrink from no detail; they have already inhaled the filthy odours from the highly polished pastorals of the amiable poet.[1] They laugh to see Lucy show her pregnancy to Macheath, and give Polly 'rats-bane.' They are familiar with all the refinements of the gallows, and all the niceties of medicine. Mistress Trapes expounds her trade before them, and complains of having 'eleven fine customers now down under the surgeon's hands.' Mr. Filch, a prison-prop, uses words which cannot even be quoted. A cruel keenness, sharpened by a stinging irony, flows through the work, like one of those London streams whose corrosive smells Swift and Gay have described; more than a hundred years later it still proclaims the dishonour of the society which is bespattered and befouled with its mire.

III.

These were but the externals; and close observers, like Voltaire, did not misinterpret them. Betwixt the slime at the bottom and the scum on the surface rolled the great national river, which, purified by its own motion, already at intervals gave signs of its true colour, soon to display the powerful regularity of its course and the wholesome limpidity of its waters. It advanced in its native bed; every nation has one of its own, and flows down its proper slope. It is this slope which gives to each civilisation its degree and form, and it is this which we must endeavour to describe and measure.

To this end we have only to follow the travellers from the two countries who at this time crossed the Channel. Never did England regard and imitate France more, nor France England. To see the distinct current in which each nation flowed, we have but to open our eyes. Lord Chesterfield writes to his son:

'It must be owned, that the polite conversation of the men and women at Paris, though not always very deep, is much less futile and frivolous than ours here. It turns at least upon some subject, something of taste, some point of history, criticism, and even philosophy, which, though probably not quite so solid as Mr. Locke's, is however better, and more becoming rational beings, than our frivolous dissertations upon the weather or upon whist.'[2]

In fact, the French became civilised by conversation; not so the English. As soon as the Frenchman quits mechanical labour and coarse material life, even before he quits it, he converses: this is his

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[1] In these Eclogues the ladies explain in good style that their friends have their lackeys for lovers: 'Her favours Sylvia shares amongst mankind; such gen'rous Love could never be confin'd.' Elsewhere the servant girl says to her mistress: 'Have you not fancy'd, in his frequent kiss, th' ungrateful leavings of a filthy miss?'

[2] Chesterfield's *Letters*, ii. April 22, O. S., 1751, p. 131. See, for a contrast, Swift's *Essay on Polite Conversation*.

goal and his pleasure.[1] Barely has he escaped from religious wars and feudal isolation, when he makes his bow and has his say. With the Hotel de Rambouillet we get the fine drawing-room talk, which is to last two centuries: Germans, English, all Europe, either novices or dullards, listen to France open-mouthed, and from time to time clumsily attempt an imitation. How amiable are French talkers! What discrimination! What innate tact! With what grace and dexterity they can persuade, interest, amuse, stroke down sickly vanity, rivet the diverted attention, insinuate dangerous truth, ever soaring hundred feet above the tedium-point where their rivals are floundering with all their native heaviness. But, above all, how sharp they have soon become! Instinctively and without effort they light upon easy gesture, simple speech, sustained elegance, a characteristic piquancy, a perfect clearness. Their phrases, still formal under Balzac, are looser, lightened, launch out, flow speedily, and under Voltaire find their wings. Did any one ever see such a desire, such an art of pleasing? Pedantic sciences, political economy, theology, the sullen denizens of the Academy and the Sorbonne, speak but in epigrams. Montesquieu's *l'Esprit des Lois* is also '*l'Esprit sur les lois.*' Rousseau's periods, which begat a revolution, were balanced, turned, polished for eighteen hours in his head. Voltaire's philosophy breaks out into a million sparks. Every idea must blossom into a witticism; thought is made to leap; all truth, the most thorny and the most sacred, becomes a pleasant drawing-room conceit, cast backward and forward, like a gilded shuttlecock, by delicate women's hands, without sullying the lace sleeves from which their slim arms emerge, or the garlands which the rosy Cupids unfold on the wainscoting. Everything must glitter, sparkle, or smile. The passions are refined, love is dimmed, the proprieties are multiplied, good manners are exaggerated. The refined man becomes 'sensitive.' From his wadded taffeta dressing-gown he keeps plucking his worked handkerchief to whisk away the moist omen of a tear; he lays his hand on his heart, he grows tender; he has become so delicate and correct, that an Englishman knows not whether to take him for an hysterical young woman or a dancing-master.[2] Take a clear view of this beribboned puppy, in his light-green dress, lisping out the songs of Florian. The genius of society which has led him to these fooleries has also led him elsewhere; for conversation, in France at least, is a chase after ideas. To this day, in spite of

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[1] Even in 1826, Sidney Smith, arriving at Calais, writes (*Life and Letters*, ii. 274): 'What pleases me is the taste and ingenuity displayed in the shops, and the good manners and politeness of the people. Such is the state of manners, that you appear almost to have quitted a land of barbarians. I have not seen a cobbler who is not better bred than an English gentleman.'

[2] See *Evelina*, by Miss Burney, 3 vols., 1784; observe the character of the poor, genteel Frenchman, M. Dubois, who is made to tremble even whilst lying in the gutter. These very correct young ladies go to see Congreve's *Love for Love*; their

modern distrust and sadness, it is at table, over the coffee especially, that deep politics and the loftiest philosophy crop up. To think, above all, to think rapidly, is a recreation. The mind finds in it a sort of ball; think how eagerly it hastens thither. This is the source of all French culture. At the dawn of the age, the ladies, between a couple of bows, produced studied portraits and subtle dissertations; they understand Descartes, appreciate Nicole, approve Bossuet. Presently little suppers are introduced, and during the dessert they discuss the existence of God. Are not theology, morality, set forth in a noble or piquant style, pleasures for the drawing-room and adornments of luxury? Fancy finds place amongst them, floats about and sparkles like a light flame over all the subjects on which it feeds. What a flight was this of the eighteenth century! Was society ever more anxious for lofty truths, more bold in their search, more quick to discover, more ardent in embracing them? The perfumed marquises, these laced coxcombs, all these pretty, well-dressed, gallant, frivolous people, crowd to philosophy as to the opera; the origin of animated beings, the eels of Needham, the adventures of Jacques the Fatalist,[1] and the question of free judgment, the principles of political economy, and the calculations of the Man with Forty Crowns,[2]—all is to them a matter for paradoxes and discoveries. All the heavy rocks, which the men who had made it their business, were hewing and undermining laboriously in solitude, being carried along and polished in the public torrent, roll in myriads, mingled together with a joyous clatter, hurried onwards with an ever-increasing rapidity. There was no bar, no collision; they were not hindered by the practicability of their plans: they thought for thinking's sake; theories could be expanded at ease. In fact, this is how in France men have always conversed. They play with general truths; they glean one nimbly from the heap of facts in which it lay concealed, and develop it; they hover above observation in reason and rhetoric; they find themselves uncomfortable and common-place when they are not in the region of pure ideas. And in this respect the eighteenth century continues the seventeenth. The philosophers had described good breeding, flattery, misanthropy, avarice; they now examined liberty, tyranny, religion; they had studied man in himself; they now study him in the abstract. Religious and monarchical writers are of the same family as impious and revolutionary writers; Boileau leads up to Rousseau, Racine to Robespierre. Oratorical reasoning formed

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parents are not afraid of showing them Miss Prue. See also, in *Evelina*, by way of contrast, the boorish character of the English captain; he throws Mrs. Duval twice in the mud; he says to his daughter Molly: 'I charge you, as you value my favour, that you'll never again be so impertinent as to have a taste of your own before my face' (i. 190). The change, even from sixty years ago, is surprising.

[1] The title of a philosophical novel by Diderot.—Tr.

[2] The title of a philosophical tale by Voltaire.—Tr.

the regular theatre and classical preaching; oratorical reason produces the Declaration of Rights and the *Contrat Social*. They form for themselves a certain idea of man, of his inclinations, faculties, duties; a mutilated idea, but the more clear as it was the more reduced. From being aristocratic it becomes popular; instead of being an amusement, it is a faith; from delicate and sceptical hands it passes to coarse and enthusiastic hands. From the lustre of the drawing-room they make a brand and a torch. Such is the current on which the French mind floated for two centuries, caressed by the refinements of an exquisite politeness, amused by a swarm of brilliant ideas, charmed by the promises of golden theories, till, thinking that it touched the cloud-palace, made bright by the future, it suddenly lost its footing and fell in the storm of the Revolution.

Altogether different is the path which English civilisation has taken. It is not the spirit of society which has made it, but moral sense; and the reason is, that here man is not as he is in France. The Frenchmen who became acquainted with England at this period were struck by it. 'In France,' says Montesquieu, 'I become friendly with everybody; in England with nobody. You must do here as the English do, live for yourself, care for no one, love no one, rely on no one.' They were of a singular genius, yet 'solitary and sad. They are reserved, live much in themselves, and think alone. Most of them having wit, are tormented by their very wit. In scorn or disgust of all things, they are unhappy amid so many reasons why they should not be so.' And Voltaire, like Montesquieu, continually alludes to the sombre energy of this character. He says that in London there are days when the wind is in the east, when it is customary for people to hang themselves; he relates shudderingly how a young girl cut her throat, and how the lover, without a word, bought back the knife. He is surprised to see 'so many Timons, so many splenetic misanthropes.' Whither will they go? There was one path which grew daily wider. The Englishman, naturally serious, meditative, and sad, did not regard life as a game or a pleasure; his eyes were habitually turned, not outward to smiling nature, but inward to the life of the soul; he examines himself, ever descends within himself, confines himself to the moral world, and at last sees no other beauty but that which shines there; he enthrones justice as the sole and absolute queen of humanity, and conceives the plan of disposing all his actions according to a rigid code. He has no lack of force in this; for his pride comes to assist his conscience. Having chosen himself and by himself the route, he would blush to quit it; he rejects temptations as his enemies; he feels that he is fighting and conquering,[1] that he is doing a difficult thing, that he is worthy of admiration, that he is a man. Moreover, he rescues himself from his capital foe,

[1] 'The consciousness of silent endurance, so dear to every Englishman, of standing out against something and not giving in.'—*Tom Brown's School Days.*

tedium, and satisfies his craving for action; having grasped his duties, he has a task for his faculties and an end in life, and this gives rise to associations, foundations, preachings; and finding more stedfast souls, and nerves more tightly strung, it sends them forth, without causing them too much suffering, to long strife, through ridicule and danger. The reflective character of the man has given a moral rule; the militant character now gives moral force. The mind, thus directed, is more apt than any other to comprehend duty; the will, thus armed, is more capable than any other of performing its duty. This is the fundamental faculty which is found in all parts of public life, concealed but present, like one of those deep and primeval rocks, which, lying far inland, give to all undulations of the soil a basis and a support.

IV.

To Protestantism first, and it is from this structure of mind that the Englishman is religious. Find your way through the knotty and uninviting bark. Voltaire laughs at it, and jests about the ranting of the preachers and the rigours of the faithful. 'There is no opera, no comedy, no concert on a Sunday in London; cards even are expressly forbidden, so that only persons of quality, and those who are called decent men, play on that day.' He amuses himself at the expense of the Anglicans, 'so scrupulous in collecting their tithes;' the Presbyterians, 'who look as if they were angry, and preach with a strong nasal accent;' the Quakers, 'who go to church to wait for the inspiration of God with their hats on their heads.' But is there nothing to be observed but these externals? And do you suppose that you are acquainted with a religion because you know the details of formulary and vestment? There is a common faith beneath all these sectarian differences: whatever be the form of Protestantism, its object and result are the culture of the moral sense; that is why it is popular here: principles and dogmas all make it suitable to the instincts of the nation. The sentiment which in the reformed man is the source of all, is anxiety of conscience; he pictures perfect justice, and feels that his uprightness, however great, cannot stand before that. He thinks of the Day of Judgment, and tells himself that he will be damned. He is troubled, and prostrates himself; he prays God to pardon his sins and renew his heart. He sees that neither by his desires, nor his deeds, nor by any ceremony or institution, nor by himself, nor by any creature, can he deserve the one or obtain the other. He betakes himself to Christ, the one Mediator; he prays to him, he feels his presence, he finds himself justified by his grace, elect, healed, transformed, predestinated. Thus understood, religion is a moral revolution; thus simplified, religion is only a moral revolution. Before this deep emotion, metaphysics and theology, ceremonies and discipline, all is blotted out or subordinate, and Christianity is simply the purification of the heart. Look now at these men, dressed in sombre colours, speaking through the nose on

Sundays, in a box of dark wood, whilst a man in bands, 'with the air of a Cato,' reads a psalm. Is there nothing in their heart but theological 'trash' or mechanical phrases? There is a deep sentiment—veneration. This bare Dissenters' meeting-house, this simple service and church of the Anglicans, leave them open to the impression of what they read and hear. For they do hear, and they do read; prayer in the vulgar tongue, psalms translated into the vulgar tongue, can penetrate through their senses to their souls. Be sure they do penetrate; and this is why they have such a collected mien. For the race is by nature capable of deep emotions, disposed by the vehemence of its imagination to comprehend the grand and tragic; and the Bible, which is to them the very word of eternal God, provides it. I know that to Voltaire it is only emphatic, unconnected, ridiculous; the sentiments with which it is filled are out of harmony with French sentiments. In England the hearers are on the level of its energy and harshness. The cries of anguish or admiration of the solitary Hebrew, the transports, the sudden outbursts of sublime passion, the thirst for justice, the growling of the thunder and the judgments of God, shake, across thirty centuries, these biblical souls. Their other books assist it. The Prayer Book, which is handed down as an heirloom with the old family Bible, speaks to all, to the dullest peasant, or the miner, the solemn accent of true prayer. The new-born poetry, the reviving religion of the sixteenth century, have impressed their magnificent gravity upon it; and we feel in it, as in Milton himself, the pulse of the twofold inspiration which then lifted a man out of himself and raised him to heaven. Their knees bend when they listen to it. The Confession of Faith, the collects for the sick, for the dying, in case of public misfortune or private grief, the lofty sentences of impassioned and sustained eloquence, transport a man to some unknown and august world. Let the fine gentlemen yawn, mock, and succeed in not understanding: I am sure that, of the others, many are moved. The idea of dark death and of the limitless ocean, to which the poor weak soul must descend, the thought of this invisible justice, ever present, ever foreseeing, on which the changing show of visible things depends, enlighten them with unexpected beams. The physical world and its laws seem to them but a phantom and a figure; they see nothing more real than justice; it is the sum of humanity, as of nature. This is the deep sentiment which on Sunday closes the theatre, discourages pleasures, fills the churches; this it is which pierces the breastplate of the primitive spirit and the corporeal dulness. This shopkeeper, who all the week has been counting his bales or drawing up columns of figures; this cattle-breeding squire, who can only bawl, drink, jump a fence; these yeomen, these cottagers, who amuse themselves, in order to draw blood whilst boxing, or vie with each other in grinning through a horse-collar, —all these uncultivated souls, immersed in material life, receive thus from their religion a moral life. They love it; you will hear it in the

yells of a mob, rising like a thunderstorm, when a rash hand touches or seems to touch the Church. You will see it in the sale of Protestant devotional books, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Whole Duty of Man*, alone able to force their way to the window-ledge of the yeoman and squire, where four volumes, their whole library, rest amid the fishing-tackle. You can only move the men of this race by moral reflections and religious emotions. The cooled Puritan spirit still broods underground, and is drawn in the only direction where fuel, air, fire, and action are to be found.

We obtain a glimpse of it when we look at the sects. In France, Jansenists and Jesuits seem to be puppets of another century, fighting for the amusement of this. Here Quakers, Independents, Baptists exist, serious, honoured, recognised by the State, adorned by able writers, by deep scholars, by virtuous men, by founders of nations.[1] Their piety causes their disputes; it is because they will belief, that they differ in belief: the only men without religion are those who do not care for religion. A motionless faith is soon a dead faith; and when a man becomes a sectarian, it is because he is fervent. This Christianity lives because it is developed; we see the sap, always flowing from the Protestant inquiry and faith, re-enter the old dogmas, dried up for five hundred years. Voltaire, when he came to England, was surprised to find Arians, and amongst them the first thinkers in England—Clarke, Newton himself. Not only dogma, but feeling, is renewed; beyond the speculative Arians were the practical Methodists; behind Newton and Clarke came Whitfield and Wesley.

No history more deeply illustrates the English character than that of these two men. In spite of Hume and Voltaire, they founded a monastical and convulsionary sect, and triumph through rigour and exaggeration, which would have ruined them in France. Wesley was a scholar, an Oxford student, and he believed in the devil; he attributes to him sickness, nightmare, storms, earthquakes. His family heard supernatural noises; his father had been thrice pushed by a ghost; he himself saw the hand of God in the commonest events of life. One day at Birmingham, overtaken by a hailstorm, he felt that he received this warning, because at table he had not sufficiently exhorted the people who dined with him; when he had to determine on anything, he looked out by chance for a text of Scripture, in order to decide. At Oxford he fasted and wearied himself until he spat blood, and almost died; at sea, when he departed for America, he only ate bread, and slept on deck; he lived the life of an apostle, giving away all that he earned, travelling and preaching all the year, and every year, till the age of eighty-eight;[2] it has been reckoned

[1] William Penn.

[2] On one tour he slept three weeks on the bare boards. One day, at three in the morning, he said to Nelson, his companion: 'Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer, I have one whole side yet; for the skin is off but on one side.'—Southey's *Life of Wesley*, 2 vols., 1820, ii. ch. xv. 54.

that he gave away thirty thousand pounds, travelled about a hundred thousand miles, and preached forty thousand sermons. What could such a man have done in France in the eighteenth century? Here he was listened to and followed, at his death he had eighty thousand disciples; now he has a million. The qualms of conscience, which forced him in this direction, pushed others in his footsteps. Nothing is more striking than the confession of his preachers, mostly low-born and laymen. George Story had the spleen, dreamed and mused gloomily; took to slandering himself and the occupations of men. Mark Bond thought himself damned, because when a boy he had pronounced once a blasphemy; he read and prayed unceasingly and in vain, and at last in despair enlisted, with the hope of being killed. John Haime had visions, howled, and thought he saw the devil. Another, a baker, had scruples because his master continued to bake on Sunday, wasted away with anxiety, and soon was nothing but a skeleton. These are the timorous and impassioned souls which furnish matter for religion and enthusiasm. They are numerous in this land, and on them doctrine took hold. Wesley declares that

'A string of opinions is no more Christian faith than a string of beads is Christian holiness. It is not an assent to any opinion, or any number of opinions.' 'This justifying faith implies not only the personal revelation, the inward evidence of Christianity, but likewise a sure and firm confidence in the individual believer that Christ died for *his* sin, loved *him*, and gave his life for *him*.'[1]

'By a Christian, I mean one who so believes in Christ, as that sin hath no more dominion over him.'[2]

Elsewhere, a woman, disgusted with this madness, wished to leave, but had only gone a few steps when she fell into as violent fits as others. Conversions followed these transports; the converted paid their debts, forswore drunkenness, read the Bible, prayed, and went about exhorting others. Wesley collected them into societies, formed assemblies for mutual examination and edification, submitted spiritual life to a methodic discipline, built chapels, chose preachers, founded schools, organised enthusiasm. To this day his disciples spend three millions a year in missions to all parts of the world, and on the banks of the Mississippi and the Ohio their shoutings repeat the enthusiasm and the conversions of primitive inspiration. The same instinct is still revealed by the same signs; the doctrine of grace survives in uninterrupted energy, and the race, as in the sixteenth century, puts its poetry into the exaltation of the moral sense.

The faithful feels in himself the touch of a superior hand, and the birth of an unknown being. The old man has disappeared, a new man has taken his place, pardoned, purified, transfigured, steeped in joy and confidence, inclined to good as strongly as he was once drawn to evil. A miracle has been wrought, and it can be wrought at any moment,

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*, ii. 176. [2] *Ibid.* i. 251.

suddenly, under any circumstances, without warning. Some sinner, the oldest and most hardened, without wishing it, without having dreamed of it, falls down weeping, his heart melted by grace. The dull thoughts, which fermented long in these gloomy imaginations, broke out suddenly into storms, and the dull brutal mood is shaken by nervous fits which it had not known before. Wesley, Whitfield, and their preachers went over all England preaching to the poor, the peasants, the workmen in the open air, sometimes to a congregation of twenty thousand people. 'The fire is kindled in the country.' There was sobbing and crying. At Kingswood, Whitfield, having collected the miners, a savage race, 'saw the white gutters made by the tears which plentifully fell down from their black cheeks, black as they came out from their coal-pits.'[1] Some trembled and fell; others had transports of joy, ecstasies. Southey writes thus of Thomas Olivers: 'His heart was broken, nor could he express the strong desires which he felt for righteousness. . . . He describes his feeling during a *Te Deum* at the cathedral, as if he had done with earth, and was praising God before His throne.'[2] The god and the brute, which each of us carries in himself, were let loose; the physical machine was upset; emotion was turned into madness, and the madness became contagious. An eye-witness says:

'At Everton some were shrieking, some roaring aloud. . . . The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life; and, indeed, almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish. Great numbers wept without any noise; others fell down as dead. . . . I stood upon the pew-seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew, an able-bodied, fresh, healthy, countryman, but in a moment, when he seemed to think of nothing else, down he dropt, with a violence inconceivable. . . . I heard the stamping of his feet, ready to break the boards, as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew. . . . I saw a sturdy boy, about eight years old, who roared above his fellows; . . . his face was red as scarlet; and almost all on whom God laid his hand, turned either very red or almost black.'[3]

V.

A sort of theological smoke covers and hides this glowing hearth which burns in silence. A stranger who, at this time, had visited the country, would see in this religion only a choking vapour of arguments, controversies, and sermons. All those celebrated preachers, Barrow, Tillotson, South, Stillingfleet, Sherlock, Burnet, Baxter, Barclay, preached, says Addison, like automatons, monotonously, without moving their arms. For a Frenchman, for Voltaire, who read them, as he read everything, what a strange reading! Here is Tillotson first, the most authoritative of all, a kind of Father of the Church, so much admired that Dryden tells us that he learned from him the art of writ-

[1] Southey's *Life of Wesley*, i. ch. vi. 236.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. ch. xvii. 111. [3] *Ibid.* ii. ch. xxiv. 320.

ing well, and that his sermons, the only property which he left his widow, were bought by a publisher for two thousand five hundred pounds. This work has, in fact, some weight; there are three folio volumes, each of seven hundred pages. To open them, you must be a critic by profession, or absolutely desire to get saved. And now let us open them. 'The Wisdom of being Religious,'—such is his first sermon, much celebrated in his time, and the foundation of his success:

'These words consist of two propositions, which are not distinct in sense; . . . so that they differ only as cause and effect, which by a metonymy, used in all sorts of authors, are frequently put one for other.'[1]

This opening makes us uneasy. Is this great orator a teacher of grammar?

'Having thus explained the words, I come now to consider the proposition contained in them, which is this: That religion is the best knowledge and wisdom. This I shall endeavour to make good these three ways:—1*st*, By a direct proof of it; 2*d*, By shewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedness; 3*d*, By vindicating religion from those common imputations which seem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence. I begin with the direct proof of this.'[2] . . .

Thereupon he gives his divisions. What a heavy demonstrator! One is tempted to turn over the leaves only, and not to read them Let us examine his 'Forty-second sermon, against Evil-speaking:'

'*Firstly:* I shall consider the nature of this vice, and wherein it consists. *Secondly:* I shall consider the due extent of this prohibition to speak evil of no man. *Thirdly:* I shall show the evil of this practice, both in the causes and effects of it. *Fourthly:* I shall add some further considerations to dissuade men from it. *Fifthly:* I shall give some rules and directions for the prevention and cure of it.'[3]

What a style! and it is the same throughout. There is nothing lifelike; it is a skeleton, with all its joints coarsely displayed. All the ideas are ticketed and numbered. The schoolmen were not worse. Neither rapture nor vehemence; no wit, no imagination, no original and brilliant idea, no philosophy; nothing but quotations of mere scholarship, and enumerations from a handbook. The dull argumentative reason comes with its pigeon-holed classifications upon a great truth of the heart or an impassioned word from the Bible, examines it 'positively and negatively,' draws thence 'a lesson and an encouragement,' arranges each part under its heading, patiently, indefatigably, so that sometimes three whole sermons are needed to complete the division and the proof, and each of them contains in its exordium the methodical abstract of all the points treated and the arguments supplied. Just so were the discussions of the Sorbonne carried on. At the court of

[1] Tillotson's *Sermons*, 12 vols., 1742, i. 1. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* iii. 188.

Louis XIV. Tillotson would have been taken for a man, who had run away from a seminary; Voltaire would call him a village curé. He has all that is necessary to shock men of the world, nothing to attract them. For he does not address men of the world, but Christians: his hearers neither need nor desire to be goaded or amused; they do not ask for analytical refinements, novelties in matter of feeling. They come to have Scripture explained to them, and morality demonstrated. The force of their zeal is only manifested by the gravity of their attention. Let others make a pretext out of a text; for them, they cling to it: it is the very word of God, they cannot dwell on it too much. They must have the sense of every word hunted out, the passage interpreted phrase by phrase, in itself, by the context, by similar passages, by general doctrines. They are willing to have the different readings, translations, interpretations expounded; they like to see the orator become a grammarian, a Hellenist, a scholiast. They are not repelled by all this dust of scholarship, which rises from the folios to settle upon their countenance. And the precept being laid down, they demand an enumeration of all the reasons which support it; they wish to be convinced, carry away in their heads a provision of good, approved motives to last the week. They came there seriously, as to their counting-house or their field, to get tired and wearied out with the task, to toil and dig conscientiously in theology and logic, to amend and better themselves. They would be angry at being dazzled. Their great sense, their ordinary common sense, is much better pleased with cold discussions; they want inquiries and methodical reports in the matter of morality, as in a matter of tariff, and treat conscience as port wine or herrings.

In this Tillotson is admirable. Doubtless he is pedantic, as Voltaire called him; he has all 'the bad manners learned at the university;' he has not been 'polished by association with women;' he is not like the French preachers, academicians, elegant discoursers, who by a courtly air, a well-delivered Advent sermon, the refinements of a purified style, earn the first vacant bishopric and the favour of high society. But he writes like a perfectly honest man; we can see that he is not aiming in any way at the glory of an orator; he wishes to persuade soundly, nothing more. We enjoy this clearness, this naturalness, this justness, this entire loyalty. In one of his sermons he says:

'Truth and reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the show of anything be good for anything, I am sure sincerity is better; for why does any man dissemble, or seem to be that which he is not, but because he thinks it good to have such a quality as he pretends to? For to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency. Now, the best way in the world for a man to seem to be anything, is really to be what he would seem to be. Besides, that it is many times as troublesome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one but he is discovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to

seem to have it are lost. There is something unnatural in painting, which a skilful eye will easily discern from native beauty and complexion.

'It is hard to personate and act a part long; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other. Therefore, if any man think it convenient to seem good, let him be so indeed, and then his goodness will appear to everybody's satisfaction; . . . so that, upon all accounts, sincerity is true wisdom.'[1]

We are led to believe a man who speaks thus; we say to ourselves, 'This is true, he is right, we must do as he says.' The impression received is moral, not literary; the sermon is efficacious, not rhetorical; it does not please, it leads to action.

In this great manufactory of morality, where every loom goes on as regularly as its neighbour, with a monotonous noise, we distinguish two which sound louder and better than the rest—Barrow and South. Not that they were free from dulness. Barrow had all the air of a college pedant, and dressed so badly, that one day in London, before an audience who did not know him, he saw almost the whole congregation at once leave the church. He explained the word εὐχαριστεῖν in the pulpit with all the charm of a dictionary, commenting, translating, dividing, subdividing like the most formidable of scholiasts,[2] caring no more for the public than for himself; so that once, when he had spoken for three hours and a half before the Lord Mayor, he replied to those who asked him if he was not tired, 'I did, in fact, begin to be weary of standing so long.' But the heart and mind were so full and so rich, that his faults became a power. He had a geometrical method and clearness,[3] an inexhaustible fertility, extraordinary impetuosity and tenacity of logic, writing the same sermon three or four times over, insatiable in his craving to explain and prove, obstinately confined to his already overflowing thoughts, with a minuteness of division, an exactness of con-

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[1] Tillotson's *Sermons*, iv. 363; Sermon 55, 'Of Sincerity towards God and Man,' John i. 47. This was the last sermon Tillotson preached; July 29, 1694.

[2] Barrow's *Theological Works*, 8 vols. Oxford, 1830, i. 179; Sermon viii., 'The Duty of Thanksgiving,' Eph. v. 20.

'These words, although (as the very syntax doth immediately discover) they bear a relation to, and have a fit coherence with, those that precede, may yet, (especially considering St. Paul's style and manner of expression in the preceptive and exhortative parts of his Epistles), without any violence or prejudice on either hand, be severed from the context, and considered distinctly by themselves. . . . First, then, concerning the duty itself, *to give thanks*, or rather *to be thankful* (for εὐχαριστεῖν doth not only signify *gratias agere, reddere, dicere*, to *give, render*, or *declare thanks*, but also *gratias habere, grate affectum esse*, to be *thankfully disposed*, to entertain a grateful affection, sense, or memory. . . . I say, concerning this duty itself, (abstractedly considered), as it involves a respect to benefits or good things received; so in its employment about them it imports, requires, or supposes these following particulars.'

[3] He was a mathematician of the highest order, and had resigned his chair to Newton.

nection, a superfluity of explanation, so astonishing that the hearer at last gives in; and yet the mind turns with the vast machine, carried away and doubled up as by the rolling weight of a flattening machine.

Listen to his sermon, 'Of the Love of God.' Never was a more copious and forcible analysis seen in England, so penetrating and unwearying a decomposition of an idea into all its parts, a more powerful logic, more rigorously collecting into one network all the threads of a subject:

'Although no such benefit or advantage can accrue to God, which may increase his essential and indefectible happiness; no harm or damage can arrive that may impair it (for he can be neither really more or less rich, or glorious, or joyful than he is; neither have our desire or our fear, our delight or our grief, our designs or our endeavours any object, any ground in those respects); yet hath he declared, that there be certain interests and concernments, which, out of his abundant goodness and condescension, he doth tender and prosecute as his own; as if he did really receive advantage by the good, and prejudice by the bad success, respectively belonging to them; that he earnestly desires and is greatly delighted with some things, very much dislikes and is grievously displeased with other things: for instance, that he bears a fatherly affection toward his creatures, and earnestly desires their welfare; and delights to see them enjoy the good he designed them; as also dislikes the contrary events; doth commiserate and condole their misery; that he is consequently well pleased when piety and justice, peace and order (the chief means conducing to our welfare) do flourish; and displeased, when impiety and iniquity, dissension and disorder (those certain sources of mischief to us) do prevail; that he is well satisfied with our rendering to him that obedience, honour, and respect, which are due to him; and highly offended with our injurious and disrespectful behaviour toward him, in the commission of sin and violation of his most just and holy commandments; so that there wants not sufficient matter of our exercising good-will both in affection and action toward God; we are capable both of wishing and (in a manner, as he will interpret and accept it) of doing good to him, by our concurrence with him in promoting those things which he approves and delights in, and in removing the contrary.'[1]

This entanglement wearies one, but what a force and dash is there in this meditative and complete thought! Truth thus supported on all its foundations can never be shaken. Observe the absence of rhetoric. There is no art here; the whole oratorical art consists in the desire thoroughly to explain and prove what he has to say. He is even loose and artless; and it is just this ingenuousness which raises him to the antique level. You may meet with an image in his writings which seems to belong to the finest period of Latin simplicity and dignity:

'The middle, we may observe, and the safest, and the fairest, and the most conspicuous places in cities are usually deputed for the erections of statues and monuments dedicated to the memory of worthy men, who have nobly deserved of their countries. In like manner should we in the heart and centre of our soul, in the

[1] Barrow's *Theological Works*, i., Sermon 23, 627.

best and highest apartments thereof, in the places most exposed to ordinary observation, and most secure from the invasions of worldly care, erect lively representations of, and lasting memorials unto, the divine bounty.'[1]

There is here a sort of effusion of gratitude; and at the end of the sermon, when we think him exhausted, the expansion becomes more copious by the enumeration of the unlimited blessings amidst which we float like fishes in the sea, not perceiving them, because we are surrounded and penetrated by them. During ten pages the idea overflows in a continuous and similar phrase, without fear of crowding or monotony, in spite of all rules, so loaded are the heart and imagination, and so satisfied are they to bring and collect all nature as a single offering:

'To him, the excellent quality, the noble end, the most obliging manner of whose beneficence doth surpass the matter thereof, and hugely augment the benefits: who, not compelled by any necessity, not obliged by any law (or previous compact), not induced by any extrinsic arguments, not inclined by our merit, not wearied with our importunities, not instigated by troublesome passions of pity, shame, or fear, (as we are wont to be), not flattered with promises of recompense, nor bribed with expectation of emolument, thence to accrue unto himself; but being absolute master of his own actions, only both lawgiver and counsellor to himself, all-sufficient, and incapable of admitting any accession to his perfect blissfulness; most willingly and freely, out of pure bounty and good-will, is our Friend and Benefactor; preventing not only our desires, but our knowledge; surpassing not our deserts only, but our wishes, yea, even our conceits, in the dispensation of his inestimable and unrequitable benefits; having no other drift in the collation of them, beside our real good and welfare, our profit and advantage, our pleasure and content.'[2]

Zealous energy and lack of taste; such are the features common to all this eloquence. Let us leave this mathematician, this man of the closet, this antique man, who proves too much and is too eager, and let us look out amongst the men of the world he who was called the wittiest of ecclesiastics, Robert South, as different from Barrow in his character and life as in his works and his mind; armed for war, an impassioned royalist, a partisan of divine right and passive obedience, an acrimonious controversialist, a defamer of the dissenters, a foe to the Act of Toleration, who never refused to use in his enmities the licence of an insult or a foul word. By his side Father Bridaine,[3] who seems so coarse to the French, was polished. His sermons are like a conversation of that time; and you know in what style they conversed then in England. South is afraid of no popular and impassioned image. He sets forth little vulgar facts, with their low and striking details. He never shrinks, he never minces matters; he speaks the language of the

[1] Barrow's *Theological Works*, i. 184; Sermon viii., 'The Duty of Thanksgiving,' Eph. v. 20.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 202.

[3] Jacques Bridaine (1701–1767), a celebrated and zealous French preacher, whose sermons were always extempore, and hence not very cultivated and refined in style.—Tr.

people. His style is anecdotic, striking, abrupt, with change of tone, forcible and clownish gestures, with every species of originality, vehemence, and boldness. He sneers in the pulpit, he rails, he plays the mimic and comedian. He paints his characters as if he had them before his eyes. The audience will recognise the originals again in the streets; they could put the names to the portraits. Read this bit on hypocrites:

'Suppose a man infinitely ambitious, and equally spiteful and malicious; one who poisons the ears of great men by venomous whispers, and rises by the fall of better men than himself; yet if he steps forth with a Friday look and a Lenten face, with a blessed Jesu! and a mournful ditty for the vices of the times; oh! then he is a saint upon earth: an Ambrose or an Augustine (I mean not for that earthly trash of book-learning; for, alas! such are above that, or at least that's above them), but for zeal and for fasting, for a devout elevation of the eyes, and a holy rage against other men's sins. And happy those ladies and religious dames, characterized in the 2d of Timothy, ch. iii. 6, who can have such self-denying, thriving, able men for their confessors! and thrice happy those families where they vouchsafe to take their Friday night's refreshments! and thereby demonstrate to the world what Christian abstinence, and what primitive, self-mortifying rigor there is in forbearing a dinner, that they may have the better stomach to their supper. In fine, the whole world stands in admiration of them; fools are fond of them, and wise men are afraid of them; they are talked of, they are pointed at; and, as they order the matter, they draw the eyes of all men after them, and generally something else.'[1]

A man so frank of speech was sure to commend frankness; he has done so with the pointed irony, the brutality of a Wycherley. The pulpit had the plain-dealing and coarseness of the stage; and in this picture of forcible, honest men, whom the world considers as bad characters, we find the pungent familiarity of the *Plain Dealer:*

'Again, there are some, who have a certain ill-natured stiffness (forsooth) in their tongue, so as not to be able to applaud and keep pace with this or that self-admiring, vain-glorious Thraso, while he is pluming and praising himself, and telling fulsome stories in his own commendation for three or four hours by the clock, and at the same time reviling and throwing dirt upon all mankind besides.

'There is also a sort of odd ill-natured men, whom neither hopes nor fears, frowns nor favours, can prevail upon, to have any of the cast, beggarly, forlorn nieces or kinswomen of any lord or grandee, spiritual or temporal, trumped upon them.

'To which we may add another sort of obstinate ill-natured persons, who are not to be brought by any one's guilt or greatness, to speak or write, or to swear or lie, as they are bidden, or to give up their own consciences in a compliment to those, who have none themselves.

'And lastly, there are some, so extremely ill-natured, as to think it very lawful and allowable for them to be sensible when they are injured or oppressed, when they are slandered in their good names, and wronged in their just interests;

[1] South's *Sermons*, 1715, 11 vols., vi. 110. The fourth and last discourse from those words in Isaiah, v. 20.

and, withal, to dare to own what they find, and feel, without being such beasts of burden as to bear tamely whatsoever is cast upon them; or such spaniels as to lick the foot which kicks them, or to thank the goodly great one for doing them all these back favours.'[1]

In this eccentric style all blows tell; we might call it a boxing-match in which sneers inflict bruises. But see the effect of these churls' vulgarities. We issue thence with a soul full of energetic feeling; we have seen the very objects, as they are, without disguise; we find ourselves battered, but seized by a vigorous hand. This pulpit is effective; and indeed, as compared with the French pulpit, this is its characteristic. These sermons have not the art and artifice, the propriety and moderation of French sermons; they are not, like the latter, monuments of style, composition, harmony, veiled science, tempered imagination, disguised logic, sustained good taste, exquisite proportion, equal to the harangues of the Roman forum and the Athenian agora. They are not classical. No, they are practical. A rude shovel, roughly handled, and encrusted with pedantic rust, was necessary to dig in this coarse civilisation. The delicate French gardening would have done nothing with it. If Barrow is redundant, Tillotson heavy, South vulgar, the rest unreadable, they are all convincing; their sermons are not models of elegance, but instruments of edification. Their glory is not in their books, but in their works. They have framed morals, not literary remains.

VI.

To form morals is not all; there are creeds to be defended. We must combat doubt as well as vice, and theology goes side by side with preaching. It abounds at this moment in England. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, Baptists, Antitrinitarians, wrangle with each other, 'as heartily as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit,' and are never tired of inventing weapons. What is there to take hold of and preserve in all this arsenal? In France at least theology is lofty; the fairest flowers of mind and genius have there grown over the briars of scholastics; if the subject repels, the dress attracts. Pascal and Bossuet, Fénelon and La Bruyère, Voltaire, Diderot and Montesquieu, friends and enemies, all have scattered their wealth of pearls and gold. Over the threadbare woof of barren doctrines the seventeenth century has embroidered a majestic stole of purple and silk; and the eighteenth century, crumpling and tearing it, scatters it in a thousand golden threads, which sparkle like a ball-dress. But in England all is dull, dry, and gloomy; the great men themselves, Addison and Locke, when they meddle in the defence of Christianity, become flat and wearisome. From Chillingworth to Paley, apologies, refutations, expositions, discussions, multiply and make us yawn; they reason well, and that is all. The theologian enters on a campaign against the Papists of the

[1] South's *Sermons*, vi. 118. The fourth and last discourse from these words in Isaiah, v. 20.

seventeenth century and the Deists of the eighteenth,[1] like a tactician, by rule, taking a position on a principle, throwing up a breastwork of arguments, covering all with texts, marching calmly underground in the long shafts which he has dug; we approach and see a sallow-faced pioneer creep out, with frowning brow, stiff hands, dirty clothes; he thinks he is protected from all attacks; his eyes, glued to the ground, have not seen the broad level road beside his bastion, by which the enemy will outflank and surprise him. A sort of incurable mediocrity keeps men like him, mattock in hand, in their trenches, where no one is likely to pass. They understand neither their texts nor their formulas. They are impotent in criticism and philosophy. They treat the poetic figures of Scripture, the bold style, the approximations to improvisation, the mystical Hebrew emotion, the subtilties and abstractions of Alexandrian metaphysics, with the precision of a jurist and a psychologist. They would actually make Scripture an exact code of prescriptions and definitions, drawn up by a convention of legislators. Open the first that comes to hand, one of the oldest—John Hales. He comments on a passage of St. Matthew, where a question arises on a matter forbidden on the Sabbath. What was this, 'to go amongst the corn, to pluck the ears or to eat thereof?' Then follow divisions and arguments raining down by myriads.[2] Take the most celebrated: Sherlock, applying the new psychology, invents an explanation of the Trinity, and imagines three divine souls, each knowing what passes in the others. Stillingfleet refutes Locke, who thought that the soul in the resurrection, though having a body, would not perhaps have exactly the same one in which it had lived. Go to the most illustrious of all, the learned Clarke, a mathematician, philosopher, scholar, theologian; he is busy patching up Arianism. The great Newton himself comments on the Apocalypse, and proves that the Pope is Antichrist. In vain have they genius; as soon as they touch religion, they dote, dwindle; they make no way; they are wedged in, and obstinately knock their heads against the same obstacle. Generation after generation they bury themselves in the hereditary hole with English patience and conscientiousness, whilst the enemy marches by, a league off. Yet in the

[1] I thought it necessary to look into the Socinian pamphlets, which have swarmed so much among us within a few years.—Stillingfleet, *In Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1697.

[2] He examines, amongst other things, 'the sin against the Holy Ghost.' They would much like to know in what this consists. But nothing is more obscure. Calvin and other theologians each gave a different definition. After a minute dissertation, John Hales concludes thus: 'And though negative proofs from Scripture are not demonstrative, yet the general silence of the apostles may at least help to infer a probability that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not committable by any Christian who lived not in the time of our Saviour' (1636). This is a training for argument. So, in Italy, the discussion about giving drawers to, or withholding them from the Capuchins, developed political and diplomatic ability.

hole they argue; they square it, round it, face it with stones, then with bricks, and yet wonder that with all these expedients the enemy marches on. I have read a host of these treatises, and I have not gleaned an idea. A man is annoyed to see so much lost labour; is amazed that, during so many generations, people so virtuous, zealous, thoughtful, loyal, well read, well trained in discussion, have only succeeded in filling the lower shelves of libraries. We muse sadly on this second scholastic theology, and end by perceiving that if it was without effect in the kingdom of science, it was because it only strove to bear fruit in the kingdom of action.

All these speculative minds were so in appearance only. They were apologists, and not inquirers. They busy themselves with morality, not with truth.[1] They would shrink from treating God as a hypothesis, and the Bible as a document. They would see a vicious tendency in the wide impartiality of criticism and philosophy. They would have scruples of conscience if they indulged in free inquiry without limitation. In fact, there is a sort of sin in really free inquiry, because it presupposes scepticism, abandons respect, weighs good and evil in the same balance, and equally receives all doctrines, scandalous or edifying, as soon as they are proved. They banish these dissolving speculations; they look on them as occupations of the slothful; they seek from argument only motives and means for right conduct. They do not love it for itself; they repress it as soon as it strives to become independent; they demand that reason shall be Christian and Protestant; they would give it the lie under any other form; they reduce it to the humble position of a handmaid, and set over it their own inner biblical and utilitarian sense. In vain did free-thinkers arise in the beginning of the century; forty years later,[2] they were drowned in forgetfulness. Deism and atheism were here only a transient eruption developed on the surface of the social body, in the bad air of the great world and the plethora of native energy. Professed irreligious men—Toland, Tindal, Mandeville, Bolingbroke—met foes stronger than themselves. The leaders of experimental philosophy,[3] the most learned and accredited of scholars of the age,[4] the most witty authors, the most beloved and able,[5] all the authority of science and genius was employed in putting them down. Refutations abound. Every year, on the foundation of Robert Boyle, men noted for their talent or knowledge come to London

[1] 'The Scripture is a book of morality, and not of philosophy. Everything there relates to practice. . . . It is evident, from a cursory view of the Old and New Testament, that they are miscellaneous books, some parts of which are history, others writ in a poetical style, and others prophetical; but the design of them all, is professedly to recommend the practice of true religion and virtue.'—John Clarke, Chaplain of the King, 1721.

[2] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

[3] Ray. Boyle, Barrow, Newton. [4] Bentley, Clarke, Warburton, Berkeley.

[5] Locke, Addison, Swift, Johnson, Richardson.

to preach eight sermons, 'to establish the Christian religion against atheists, deists, pagans, Mohammedans, and Jews.' And these apologies are solid, able to convince a liberal mind, infallible for the conviction of a moral mind. The clergymen who write them, Clarke, Bentley, Law, Watt, Warburton, Butler, are not below the lay science and intellect. Moreover, the lay element assists them. Addison writes the *Evidences of Christianity*, Locke the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, Ray the *Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation.* Over and above this concert of serious words is heard a ringing voice: Swift compliments with his terrible irony the elegant rogues who entertained the wise idea of abolishing Christianity. If they had been ten times more numerous they would not have succeeded, for they had nothing to substitute in its place. Lofty speculation, which alone could take the ground, was shown or declared to be impotent. On all sides philosophical conceptions dwindle or come to nought. If Berkeley lighted on one, the denial of matter, it stands alone, without influence on the public, as it were a theological *coup d'état*, like a pious man who wants to undermine immorality and materialism at their basis. Newton attained at most an incomplete idea of space, and was only a mathematician. Locke, almost as poor,[1] gropes about, hesitates, does little more than guess, doubt, start an opinion to advance and withdraw it by turns, not seeing its far-off consequences, nor, above all, exhausting anything. In short, he forbids himself lofty questions, and is very much inclined to forbid them to us. He has written a book to inquire what objects are within our reach, or above our comprehension. He seeks for our limitations; he soon finds them, and troubles himself no further. Let us shut ourselves in our own little domain, and work there diligently. 'Our business in this world is not to know all things, but those which regard the conduct of our life.' If Hume, more bold, goes further, it is in the same track: he preserves nothing of lofty science; he abolishes speculation altogether. According to him, we know neither substances, causes, nor laws. When we affirm that an object is conjoined to another object, it is because we choose, by custom; 'all events seem entirely loose and separate.' If we give them 'a tie,' it is our imagination which creates it;[2] there is nothing true but doubt. The conclusion is, that we shall do well to purge our mind of all theory, and only believe in order that we may act. Let us examine our wings only in order to cut them off, and let us confine

[1] 'Paupertina philosophia,' says Leibnitz.

[2] After the constant conjunction of two objects—heat and flame, for instance, weight and solidity—we are determined by custom alone to expect the one from the appearance of the other. All inferences from experience are effects of custom, not of reasoning. . . . Upon the whole, there appears not, throughout all nature, any one instance of connection which is conceivable by us. All events seem entirely loose and separate; one event follows another; but we can never observe any tie between them. They seem conjoined, but never connected.

ourselves to walking. So finished a pyrrhonism serves only to cast the world back upon established beliefs. In fact, Reid, being honest, is alarmed. He sees society broken up, God vanishing in smoke, the family evaporating in hypotheses. He objects as a father of a family, a good citizen, a religious man, and sets up common sense as a sovereign judge of truth. Rarely, I think, in this world has speculation fallen lower. Reid does not even understand the systems which he discusses; he lifts his hands to heaven when he tries to expound Aristotle and Leibnitz. If some municipal body were to order a system, it would be this churchwarden-philosophy. At bottom the men of this country did not care for metaphysics; to interest them, it must be reduced to psychology. Then it becomes a science of observation, positive and useful, like botany; still the best fruit which they pluck from it is a theory of moral sentiments. In this domain Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Price, Smith, Ferguson, and Hume himself prefer to labour; here they find their most original and durable ideas. On this point the public instinct is so strong, that it enrols the most independent minds in its service, and only permits them the discoveries which turn to its profit. Except two or three, chiefly purely literary men, and who are French or Frenchified in mind, they busy themselves only with morals. This idea rallies round Christianity all the forces which in France Voltaire ranges against it. They all defend it on the same ground—as a tie for civil society, and as a support for private virtue. Formerly instinct supported it; now opinion consecrates it; and it is the same secret force which, by an insensible labour, at present adds the weight of opinion to the pressure of instinct. Moral sense, having preserved for it the fidelity of the lower classes, conquered for it the assent of the loftier intellects. Moral sense transfers it from the public conscience to the literary world, and from being popular, makes it official.

VII.

One would hardly suspect this public tendency, after taking a distant view of the English constitution; but on a closer view it is the first thing we see. It appears to be an aggregate of privileges, that is, of sanctioned injustices. The truth is, that it is a body of contracts, that is, of recognised rights. Every one, great or small, has its own, which he defends with all his might. My lands, my property, my chartered right, whatsoever it be, ancient, indirect, superfluous, individual, public, none shall touch it, king, lords, nor commons. Is it of the value of five shillings? I will defend it like a million pounds; it is my person which they would fetter. I will leave my business, lose my time, throw away my money, make associations, pay fines, go to prison, perish in the attempt; no matter; I shall show that I am no coward, that I will not bend under injustice, that I will not yield a portion of my right.

By this sentiment Englishmen have conquered and preserved public

liberty. This feeling, after they had dethroned Charles I. and James II., is shaped into principles in the Declaration of 1689, and is developed by Locke in demonstrations.[1] 'All men,' says Locke, 'are naturally in a state of perfect freedom, also of equality.'[2] 'In the State of Nature every one has the Executive power of the Law of Nature,'[3] *i.e.* of judging, punishing, making war, ruling his family and dependents. 'There only is political society where every one of the members hath quitted this natural Power, resign'd it up into the Hands of the Community in all Cases that exclude him not from appealing for Protection to the Law established by it.'[4]

'Those who are united into one body and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority . . . to punish offenders, are in civil society one with another.[5] As for the ruler (it is said), he ought to be absolute . . . because he has power to do more hurt and wrong; it is right when he does it. . . .This is to think, that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes; but are content, nay think it safety, to be devoured by lions.[6] The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community, for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it.'[7]

Umpires, rules of arbitration, this is all which their federation can impose upon them. They are freemen, who, having made a mutual treaty, are still free. Their society does not found, but guarantees their rights. And official acts here sustain abstract theory. When Parliament declares the throne vacant, its first argument is, that the king has violated the original contract by which he was king. When the Commons impeach Sacheverell, it was in order publicly to maintain that the constitution of England was founded on a contract, and that the subjects of this kingdom have, in their different public and private capacities, as legal a title to the possession of the rights accorded to them by law, as the prince has to the possession of the crown. When Lord Chatham defended the election of Wilkes, it was by laying down that 'the rights of the greatest and of the meanest subjects now stand

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[1] We must read Sir Robert Filmore's *Patriarcha* on the prevailing theory, in order to see from what a quagmire of follies people emerged. He said that Adam, on his creation, had received an absolute and regal power over the universe; that in every society of men there was one legitimate king, the direct heir of Adam. 'Some say it was by lot, and others that Noah sailed round the Mediterranean in ten years, and divided the world into Asia, Afric, and Europa—portions for his three sons.' Compare Bossuet, *Politique fondée sur l'Ecriture.* At this epoch moral science was being emancipated from theology.

[2] Locke, *Of Civil Government,* 1714, book ii. ch. ii. § 4.

[3] *Ibid.* § 13. [4] *Ibid.* ii. ch. vii. § 87. [5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.* ii. ch. vii. § 93. [7] *Ibid.* ii. ch. viii. § 95.

upon the same foundation, the security of law common to all. . . . When the people had lost their rights, those of the peerage would soon become insignificant.' It was no supposition or philosophy which founded them, but an act and deed, Magna Charta, the Petition of Rights, the Habeas Corpus Act, and the whole body of the statute laws.

These rights are there, inscribed on parchments, stored up in archives, signed, sealed, authentic; those of the farmer and prince are traced on the same page, in the same ink, by the same writer; both are on an equality on this vellum; the gloved hand clasps the horny palm. What though they are unequal? It is by mutual accord: the peasant is as much a master in his cottage, with his rye-bread and his nine shillings a week,[1] as the Duke of Marlborough in Blenheim Castle, with his many thousands a year in places and pensions.

There they are, these men, standing firm and ready to defend themselves. Pursue this sentiment of right in the details of political life; the force of brutal temperament and concentrated or savage passions provides arms. If you go to an election, the first thing you see is the full tables.[2] They cram themselves at the candidate's expense: ale, gin, brandy are set flowing without concealment; the victuals descend into their electoral stomachs, and their faces grow red. At the same time they become furious. 'Every glass they pour down serves to increase their animosity. Many an honest man, before as harmless as a tame rabbit, when loaded with a single election dinner, has become more dangerous than a charged culverin.'[3] The wrangle turns into a fight, and the pugnacious instinct, once loosed, craves for blows. The candidates bawl against each other, till they are hoarse. They are chaired about, to the great peril of their necks; the mob yells, cheers, grows warm with the motion, the defiance, the row; big words of patriotism peal out, anger and drink inflame their veins, fists are clenched, clubs are at work, and bulldog passions regulate the greatest interests of the country. Let all beware how they draw them down on their heads: Lords, Commons, King, they will spare no one; and when Government would oppress a man in spite of them, they will compel Government to suppress their own law.

They are not to be muzzled, they make that a matter of pride.

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[1] De Foe's estimate.

[2] 'Their eating, indeed, amazes me; had I five hundred heads, and were each head furnished with brains, yet would they all be insufficient to compute the number of cows, pigs, geese, and turkies which upon this occasion die for the good of their country! . . . On the contrary, they seem to lose their temper as they lose their appetites; every morsel they swallow. The mob meet upon the debate, fight themselves sober, and then draw off to get drunk again, and charge for another encounter.'—Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, Letter cxii., 'An Election described.' See also Hogarth's prints.

[3] *Ibid.*

With them, pride assists instinct in defending the right. Each feels that 'his house is his castle,' and that the law keeps guard at his door. Each tells himself that he is defended against private insolence, that the public arbitrary power will never touch him, that he has 'his body,' and can answer blows by blows, wounds by wounds, that he will be judged by an impartial jury and a law common to all. 'Even if an Englishman,' says Montesquieu, 'has as many enemies as hairs on his head, nothing will happen to him. The laws there were not made for one more than for another; each looks on himself as a king, and the men of this nation are more confederates than fellow-citizens.' This goes so far, 'that there is hardly a day when some one does not lose respect for the king. Lately my Lady Bell Molineux, a regular virago, sent to have the trees pulled up from a small piece of land which the queen had bought for Kensington, and went to law with her, without having wished, under any pretext, to come to terms with her, and made the queen's secretary wait three hours.' 'When they come to France, they are deeply astonished to see the sway of "the king's good pleasure," the Bastille, the *lettres de cachet;* a gentleman who dare not live on his estate in the country, for fear of the governor of the province; a groom of the king's chamber, who, for a cut with the razor, kills a poor barber with impunity.'[1] In England, 'one man does not fear another.' Converse with any of them, you will find how greatly this security raises their hearts and courage. A sailor who rowed Voltaire about, and may be pressed next day into the fleet, prefers his condition to that of the Frenchman, and looks on him with pity, whilst taking his five shillings. The vastness of their pride breaks forth at every step and in every page. An Englishman, says Chesterfield, thinks himself equal to beating three Frenchmen. They would willingly declare that they are in the herd of men as bulls in a herd of cattle. You hear them bragging of their boxing, of their meat and ale, of all that can support the force and energy of their virile will. Roast-beef and beer make stronger arms than cold water and frogs.[2] In the eyes of the vulgar, the French are starved wigmakers, papists, and serfs, an inferior kind of creatures, who can neither call their bodies nor their souls their own, puppets and tools in the hands of a master and a priest. As for themselves,

> 'Stern o'er each bosom reason holds her state
> With daring aims irregularly great.
> Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
> I see the lords of human-kind pass by;
> Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
> By forms unfashion'd, fresh from nature's hand,
> Fierce in their native hardiness of soul,
> True to imagin'd right, above control,

[1] Smollett, *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. 40.

[2] See Hogarth's prints.

> While even the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
> And learns to venerate himself as man.'[1]

Men thus constituted can become impassioned in public concerns, for they are their own concerns; in France, they are only the business of the king and of Madame de Pompadour.[2] Here, political parties are as ardent as sects: High Church and Low Church, capitalists and landed proprietors, court nobility and county families, they have their dogmas, their theories, their manners, and their hatreds, like Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Quakers. The country squire rails, after his wine, at the House of Hanover, drinks to the king over the water; the Whig in London, on the 13th of January, drinks to the man in the mask,[3] and then to the man who will do the same thing without a mask. They imprisoned, exiled, beheaded each other, and Parliament re-echoed daily with the fury of their denunciations. Political, like religious life, wells up and overflows, and its outbursts only mark the force of the flame which nourishes it. The eagerness of parties, in State as in faith, is a proof of zeal; constant quiet is only general indifference; and if they fight at elections, it is because they take an interest in them. Here 'a tiler had the newspaper brought to him on the roof that he might read it.' A stranger who reads the papers 'would think the country on the eve of a revolution.' When Government takes a step, the public feels itself involved in it; its honour and its welfare are being disposed of by the minister; let the minister beware if he disposes of them ill. With the French, M. de Conflans, who lost his fleet through cowardice, is punished by an epigram; here, Admiral Byng, who was too prudent to risk his, was shot. Each in his due position, and according to his power, takes part in business: the mob broke the heads of those who would not drink Dr. Sacheverell's health; gentlemen came in mounted troops to meet him. Some public favourite or enemy is always exciting open demonstrations: Pitt, whom the people cheer, and on whom the corporations bestow many gold boxes; Grenville, whom people go to hiss when coming out of the house; Lord Bute, whom the queen loves, who is hooted, and who is burned under the emblems, a boot and a petticoat; the Duke of Bedford, whose palace is attacked by a mob, and is only saved by a garrison of infantry and horse; Wilkes, whose papers the Government seize, and to whom the jury assign an indemnity of one thousand pounds. Every morning appear journals and pamphlets to discuss affairs, criticise characters, denounce by name lords, orators, ministers, the king himself. He who wants to speak speaks. In this hubbub of writings and associations opinion swells, mounts like a wave, and falling upon Parliament and Court, drowns intrigue and carries

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[1] Goldsmith's *Traveller*.

[2] Chesterfield observes that a Frenchman of his time did not understand the word country; you must speak to him of his prince.

[3] The executioner of Charles I.

away all differences. After all, in spite of the rotten boroughs, it is opinion which rules. What though the king be obstinate, the men in power band together? Opinion growls, and everything bends or breaks. The Pitts rose as high as they did, only because public opinion raised them, and the independence of the individual ended in the sovereignty of the people.

In such a state, 'all passions being free, hatred, envy, jealousy, the fervour for wealth and distinction, were displayed in all their fulness.'[1] Judge of the force and energy with which eloquence must have been implanted and have flourished. For the first time since the fall of the ancient tribune, it found a soil in which it could take root and live, and a harvest of orators sprang up, equal, in the diversity of their talents, the energy of their convictions, and the magnificence of their style, to that which once covered the Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum*. For a long time it seemed that liberty of speech, experience in affairs, the importance of the interests involved, and the greatness of the rewards offered, should have forced its growth; but eloquence came to nothing, encrusted in theological pedantry, or limited in local aims; and the privacy of the parliamentary sittings deprived it of half its force by removing from it the light of day. Now at last there was light; publicity, at first incomplete, then entire, gives Parliament the nation for an audience. Speech is elevated and enlarged at the same time that the public is refined and multiplied. Classical art, become perfect, furnishes method and development. Modern culture introduces into technical reasoning freedom of discourse and a breadth of general ideas. In place of arguing, they conversed; they were attorneys, they became orators. With Addison, Steele, and Swift, taste and genius invade politics. Voltaire cannot say whether the meditated harangues once delivered in Athens and Rome excelled the unpremeditated speeches of Windham, Carteret, and their rivals. In short, discourse succeeds in overcoming the dryness of special questions and the coldness of compassed action, which had so long restricted it; it boldly and irregularly extends its force and luxuriance; and in contrast with the fine abbés of the drawing-room, who in France compose their academical compliments, we see appear the manly eloquence of Junius, Chatham, Fox, Pitt, Burke, and Sheridan.

I need not relate their lives nor unfold their characters; I should have to enter upon political details. Three of them, Lord Chatham, Fox, and Pitt, were ministers,[2] and their eloquence is part of their power and their acts. That eloquence is the concern of those men who may record their political history; I can simply take note of its tone and accent.

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[1] Montesquieu, book xix. ch. 27.

[2] Junius wrote anonymously, and critics have not yet been able with certainty, to reveal his true name. Most probably he was Sir Philip Francis. For Sheridan, see vol. i. 524. For Burke, see vol. ii. 81.

VIII.

An extraordinary afflatus, a sort of quivering of intense determination, runs through all these speeches. Men speak, and they speak as if they fought. No caution, politeness, restraint. They are unfettered, they abandon themselves, they hurl themselves onward; and if they restrain themselves, it is only that they may strike more pitilessly and more strongly. When the elder Pitt first filled the House with his vibrating voice, he already possessed his indomitable audacity. In vain Walpole tried to 'muzzle him,' then to crush him; his sarcasm was sent back to him with a prodigality of outrages, and the all-powerful minister bent, smitten with the truth of the biting insult which the young man inflicted on him. A proud haughtiness, only surpassed by that of his son, an arrogance which reduced his companions to the rank of subalterns, a Roman patriotism which demanded for England a universal dominion, an ambition lavish of money and men, gave the nation its rapacity and its fire, and only saw rest in far vistas of splendid glory and limitless power, an imagination which brought into Parliament the vehemence and declamation of the stage, the brilliancy of fitful inspiration, the boldness of poetic imagery. Such are the sources of his eloquence:

'But yesterday, and *England* might have stood against the world; now "none so poor to do her reverence."

'We shall be forced ultimately to retract; let us retract while we can, not when we must. I say we must necessarily undo these violent oppressive Acts: they must be repealed—you will repeal them; I pledge myself for it, that you will in the end repeal them; I stake my reputation on it. I will consent to be taken for an idiot, if they are not finally repealed.

'You may swell every expense, and every effort, still more extravagantly pile and accumulate every assistance you can buy or borrow; traffic and barter with every little pitiful German prince, that sells and sends his subjects to the shambles of a foreign prince; your efforts are for ever vain and impotent—doubly so from this mercenary aid on which you rely; for it irritates, to an incurable resentment, the minds of your enemies. To overrun them with the mercenary sons of rapine and plunder; devoting them and their possessions to the rapacity of hireling cruelty! If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms—never—never—never!

'But, my Lords, who is the man, that in addition to these disgraces and mischiefs of our army, has dared to authorize and associate to our arms the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the savage? To call into civilised alliance the wild and inhuman savage of the woods; to delegate to the merciless Indian the defence of disputed rights, and to wage the horrors of barbarous war against our brethren? My Lords, these enormities cry aloud for redress and punishment; unless thoroughly done away, it will be a stain on the national character—it is a violation of the constitution—I believe it is against law.'[1]

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[1] *Anecdotes and Speeches of the Earl of Chatham*, 4th ed., 3 vols., 1794, ii. ch. 44, 445.

There is a touch of Milton and Shakspeare in this tragic pomp, in this impassioned solemnity, in the sombre and violent brilliancy of this overstrung and overloaded style. In such superb and blood-like purple are English passions clad, under the folds of such a banner they fall into battle array; the more powerfully that amongst them there is one altogether holy, the sentiment of right, which rallies, occupies, and ennobles them:

'I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest.[1]

'Let the sacredness of their property remain inviolate; let it be taxable only by their own consent given in their provincial assemblies; else it will cease to be property.

'This glorious spirit of Whiggism animates three millions in America, who prefer with poverty liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence, and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen. . . . The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship money in England; the same spirit that called England on its legs, and by the Bill of Rights vindicated the English constitution; the same spirit which established the great, fundamental essential maxim of your liberties: that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent.

'As an Englishman by birth and principle, I recognise to the Americans their supreme unalienable right in their property, a right which they are justified in the defence of to the last extremity.'[2]

If Pitt sees his own right, he sees that of others too; it was with this idea that he moved and managed England. For it, he appealed to Englishmen against themselves; and in spite of themselves they recognised their dearest instinct in this maxim, that every human will is inviolable in its limited and legal province, and that it must put forth its whole strength against the slightest usurpation.

Unrestrained passions and the most manly sentiment of right; such is the abstract of all this eloquence. Instead of an orator, a public man, take a writer, a private individual; see the letters of Junius, which, amidst national irritation and anxiety, fell one by one like drops of fire on the fevered limbs of the body politic. If he makes his phrases concise, and selects his epithets, it was not from a love of style, but in order the better to stamp his insult. Oratorical artifices in his hand become instruments of torture, and when he files his periods it was to drive the knife deeper and surer; with what audacity of denunciation, with what sternness of animosity, with what corrosive and burning irony, applied to the most secret corners of private life, with what inexorable persistence of calculated and meditated persecution, the quotations alone will show. He writes to the Duke of Bedford:

'My lord, you are so little accustomed to receive any marks of respect or esteem

[1] *Anecdotes and Speeches of the Earl of Chatham*, ii. ch. 29, 46.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. ch. 42, 398.

from the public, that if, in the following lines, a compliment or expression of applause should escape me, I fear you would consider it as a mockery of your established character, and perhaps an insult to your understanding.'[1]

He writes to the Duke of Grafton:

'There is something in both your character and conduct which distinguishes you not only from all other ministers, but from all other men. It is not that you do wrong by design, but that you should never do right by mistake. It is not that your indolence and your activity have been equally misapplied, but that the first uniform principle, or, if I may call it, the genius of your life, should have carried you through every possible change and contradiction of conduct, without the momentary imputation or colour of a virtue: and that the wildest spirit of inconsistency should never once have betrayed you into a wise or honourable action.'[2]

Junius goes on, fiercer and fiercer; even when he sees the minister fallen and dishonoured, he is still savage. It is vain that he confesses aloud that in the state in which he is, the Duke might 'disarm a private enemy of his resentment.' He grows worse:

'You have every claim to compassion that can arise from misery and distress. The condition you are reduced to would disarm a private enemy of his resentment, and leave no consolation to the most vindictive spirit, but that such an object, as you are, would disgrace the dignity of revenge. . . . For my own part, I do not pretend to understand those prudent forms of decorum, those gentle rules of discretion, which some men endeavour to unite with the conduct of the greatest and most hazardous affairs. . . . I should scorn to provide for a future retreat, or to keep terms with a man who preserves no measures with the public. Neither the abject submission of deserting his post in the hour of danger, nor even the sacred shield of cowardice, should protect him. I would pursue him through life, and try the last exertion of my abilities to preserve the perishable infamy of his name, and make it immortal.'[3]

Except Swift, is there a human being who has more intentionally concentrated and intensified in his heart venom and hatred? Yet this is not vile, for it thinks itself to be in the service of justice. Amidst these excesses, this is the persuasion which enhances them; these men tear one another, but they do not crawl; whoever their enemy be, they take their stand in front of him. Thus Junius addresses the king:

'Sir,—It is the misfortune of your life, and originally the cause of every reproach and distress which has attended your government, that you should never have been acquainted with the language of truth until you heard it in the complaints of your people. It is not, however, too late to correct the error of your education. We are still inclined to make an indulgent allowance for the pernicious lessons you received in your youth, and to form the most sanguine hopes from the natural benevolence of your disposition. We are far from thinking you capable of a direct, deliberate purpose to invade those original rights of your subjects on which all their civil and political liberties depend. Had it been possible for us to entertain a suspicion so dishonourable to your character, we should long since have adopted a style of remonstrance very distant from the humility of complaint. . . . The people of England are loyal to the House of Hanover, not from a vain pre-

[1] Junius' *Letters*, 2 vols., 1772, xxiii. i. 162. [2] *Ibid.* xii. i. 75.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxvi. ii. 56.

ference of one family to another, but from a conviction that the establishment of that family was necessary to the support of their civil and religious liberties. This, Sir, is a principle of allegiance equally solid and rational; fit for Englishmen to adopt, and well worthy of your Majesty's encouragement. We cannot long be deluded by nominal distinctions. The name of Stuart, of itself, is only contemptible: armed with the sovereign authority, their principles are formidable. The prince who imitates their conduct, should be warned by their example; and while he plumes himself upon the security of his title to the crown, should remember that, as it was acquired by one revolution, it may be lost by another.'[1]

Let us look for less bitter souls, and try to encounter a sweeter accent. There is one man, Charles Fox, happy from his cradle, who learned everything without study, whom his father trained in prodigality and recklessness, whom, from the age of twenty-one, the public voice proclaimed as the first in eloquence and the leader of a great party, liberal, humane, sociable, faithful to these generous expectations, whose very enemies pardoned his faults, whom his friends adored, whom labour never wearied, whom rivals never embittered, whom power did not spoil; a lover of converse, of literature, of pleasure, who has left the impress of his rich genius in the persuasive abundance, in the fine character, the clearness and continuous ease of his speeches. Behold him rising to speak; think of the discretion he must use; he is a statesman, a premier, speaking in Parliament of the friends of the king, lords of the bedchamber, the noblest families of the kingdom, with their allies and connections around him; he knows that each word of his will pierce like a fiery arrow into the heart and honour of five hundred men who sit to hear him. No matter, he has been betrayed; he will punish the traitors, and here is the pillory in which he sets 'the janissaries of the bedchamber,' who by the Prince's order have deserted him in the thick of the fight:

'The whole compass of language affords no terms sufficiently strong and pointed to mark the contempt which I feel for their conduct. It is an impudent avowal of political profligacy, as if that species of treachery were less infamous than any other. It is not only a degradation of a station which ought to be occupied only by the highest and most exemplary honour, but forfeits their claim to the characters of gentlemen, and reduces them to a level with the meanest and the basest of the species; insults the noble, the ancient, and the characteristic independence of the English peerage, and is calculated to traduce and vilify the British legislature in the eyes of all Europe, and to the latest posterity. By what magic nobility can thus charm vice into virtue, I know not nor wish to know: but in any other thing than politics, and among any other men than lords of the bedchamber, such an instance of the grossest perfidy would, as it well deserves, be branded with infamy and execration.'[2]

Then turning to the Commons:

'A Parliament thus fettered and controlled, without spirit and without freedom, instead of limiting, extends, substantiates, and establishes beyond all pre-

[1] Junius' *Letters*, xxxv. ii. 29.

[2] Fox's *Speeches*, 6 vols., 1815, i. 271; Dec. 17, 1783.

cedent, latitude, or condition, the prerogatives of the crown. But though the British House of Commons were so shamefully lost to its own weight in the constitution, were so unmindful of its former struggles and triumphs in the great cause of liberty and mankind, were so indifferent and treacherous to those primary objects and concerns for which it was originally instituted, I trust the characteristic spirit of this country is still equal to the trial ; I trust Englishmen will be as jealous of secret influence as superior to open violence ; I trust they are not more ready to defend their interests against foreign depredation and insult, than to encounter and defeat this midnight conspiracy against the constitution.'[1]

Such are the outbursts of a nature above all gentle and amiable ; judge of the others. A sort of impassioned exaggeration reigns in the debates to which the trial of Warren Hastings and the French Revolution gave rise, in the acrimonious rhetoric and forced declamation of Sheridan, in the pitiless sarcasm and sententious pomp of the younger Pitt. These orators love the coarse vulgarity of gaudy colours ; they hunt out accumulations of big words, contrasts symmetrically protracted, vast and resounding periods. They do not fear to rebuff ; they crave effect. Force is their characteristic, and the characteristic of the greatest amongst them, the first mind of the age, Edmund Burke.

He did not enter Parliament, like Pitt and Fox, in the dawn of his youth, but at thirty-five, having had time to train himself thoroughly in all matters, acquainted with law, history, philosophy, literature, master of such a universal erudition, that he has been compared to Bacon. But what distinguished him from all other men was a wide, comprehensive intellect, which, exercised by philosophical studies and writings,[2] seized the general aspects of things, and, beneath text, constitutions, and figures, perceived the invisible tendency of events and the inner spirit, covering with his contempt those pretended statesmen, unfit to stand at the helm of a great state.

Beyond all those gifts, he had one of those fertile and precise imaginations which believe that finished knowledge is an inner view, which never quit a subject without having clothed it in its colours and forms, and which, passing beyond statistics and the rubbish of dry documents, recompose and reconstruct before the reader's eyes a distant country and a foreign nation, with its monuments, dresses, landscapes, and all the shifting detail of its aspects and manners. To all these powers of mind, which constitute a man of system, he added all those energies of heart which constitute an enthusiast. Poor, unknown, having spent his youth in compiling for the publishers, he rose, by dint of work and merits, with a pure reputation and an unscathed conscience, ere the trials of his obscure life or the seductions of his brilliant life had fettered his independence or tarnished the flower of his loyalty. He brought to politics a horror of crime, a vivacity and sincerity of conscience, a humanity, a sensibility, which seem only suitable to a young

[1] Fox's *Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 268.

[2] *An Inquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful.*

man. He based human society on maxims of morality, demanded the conduct of business for noble sentiments, and seemed to have undertaken to raise and dignify the generosity of the human heart. He had fought nobly for noble causes: against the outrage of power in England, the outrage of the people in France, the outrage of monopolists in India. He had defended, with immense research and unimpeached disinterestedness, the Hindoos tyrannised over by English greed:

'Every man of rank and landed fortune being long since extinguished, the remaining miserable last cultivator who grows to the soil, after having his back scored by the farmer, has it again flayed by the whip of the assignee, and is thus by a ravenous because a short-lived succession of claimants lashed from oppressor to oppressor, whilst a single drop of blood is left as the means of extorting a single grain of corn.'[1]

He made himself everywhere the champion of a principle and the persecutor of a vice; and men saw him bring to the attack all the forces of his wonderful knowledge, his lofty reason, his splendid style, with the unwearying and untempered ardour of a moralist and a knight.

Read him only several pages at a time: only thus he is great; otherwise all that is exaggerated, commonplace, and strange will arrest and shock you; but if you give yourself up to him, you will be carried away and captivated. The vast amount of his works rolls impetuously in a current of eloquence. Sometimes a spoken or written discourse needs a whole volume to unfold the train of his multiplied proofs and courageous anger. It is either the *exposé* of a ministry, or the whole history of British India, or the complete theory of revolutions, and the political conditions, which comes down like a vast, overflowing stream, to dash with its ceaseless effort and accumulated mass against some crime that men would overlook, or some injustice which they would sanction. Doubtless there is foam on its eddies, mud in its bed: thousands of strange creatures sport wildly on its surface: he does not select, he lavishes; he casts forth by myriads his multiplied fancies, emphasis and harsh words, declamations and apostrophes, jests and execrations, the whole grotesque or horrible assemblage of the distant regions and populous cities which his unwearied learning or fancy has traversed. He says, speaking of the usurious loans, at forty-eight per cent. and at compound interest, by which Englishmen had devastated India, that

'That debt forms the foul putrid mucus, in which are engendered the whole brood of creeping ascarides, all the endless involutions, the eternal knot, added to a knot of those inexpugnable tape-worms which devour the nutriment, and eat up the bowels of India.'[2]

Nothing strikes him as in excess, neither the description of tortures, nor the atrocity of his images, nor the deafening racket of his antitheses,

[1] Burke's Works, 1808, 8 vols., iv. 286, *Speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts.*
[2] *Ibid.* 282.

nor the prolonged trumpet-blast of his curses, nor the vast oddity of his jests. To the Duke of Bedford, who had reproached him with his pensions, he answers:

'The grants to the house of Russel were so enormous, as not only to outrage œconomy, but even to stagger credibility. The duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolicks in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst "he lies floating many a rood," he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin, and covers me all over with the spray,—everything of him and about him is from the throne.'[1]

Burke has no taste, nor have his compeers. The fine Greek or French deduction has never found a place among the Germanic nations; with them all is heavy or ill-refined: it is of no use for them to study Cicero, and to confine their dashing force in the orderly dykes of Latin rhetoric. He continues half a barbarian, battening in exaggeration and violence; but his fire is so sustained, his conviction so strong, his emotion so warm and abundant, that we suffer him to go on, forget our repugnance, see in his irregularities and his trespasses only the outpourings of a great heart and a deep mind, too open and too full; and we wonder with a sort of strange veneration at this extraordinary overflow, impetuous as a torrent, broad as a sea, in which the inexhaustible variety of colours and forms undulates beneath the sun of a splendid imagination, which lends to this muddy surge all the brilliancy of its rays.

IX.

If you wish for a comprehensive view of all these personages, study Reynolds,[2] and then look at the fine French portraits of this time, the cheerful ministers, gallant and charming archbishops, Marshal de Saxe, who in the Strasburg monument goes down to his tomb with the taste and ease of a courtier on the staircase at Versailles. Here, under skies drowned in pallid mists, amid soft, vaporous shades, appear expressive or contemplative heads: the rude energy of the character has not awed the artist; the coarse bloated animal; the strange and ominous bird of prey; the growling jaws of the wicked bulldog—he has put them all in: levelling politeness has not in his pictures effaced individual asperities under uniform pleasantness. Beauty is there, but variously: in the cold decision of look, in the deep seriousness and sad nobility of the pale countenance, in the conscientious gravity and the indomitable resolution of the restrained gesture. In place of Lely's courtesans, we see by their side chaste ladies, sometimes severe and active; good mothers surrounded by their little ones, who kiss them

[1] Burke's Works, viii. 35; *A Letter to a Noble Lord.*

[2] Lord Heathfield, the Earl of Mansfield, Major Stringer Lawrence, Lord Ashburton, Lord Edgecombe, etc.

and embrace one another. morality is here, and with it the sentiment of home and family, propriety of dress, a pensive air, the correct deportment of Miss Burney's heroines. They have succeeded: Bakewell transforms and reforms their cattle; Arthur Young their agriculture; Howard their prisons; Arkwright and Watt their industry; Adam Smith their political economy; Bentham their penal law; Locke, Hutcheson, Ferguson, Joseph Butler, Reid, Stewart, Price, their psychology and their morality. They have purified their private manners, they now purify their public manners. They have settled their government, they have confirmed themselves in their religion. Johnson is able to say with truth, that no nation in the world better tills its soil and its mind. There is none so rich, so free, so well nourished, where public and private efforts are directed with such assiduity, energy, and ability towards the improvement of public and private condition. One point alone is wanting: lofty speculation. It is just this point which, for lack of the rest, constitutes at this moment the glory of France; and English caricatures show, with a good appreciation of burlesque, face to face and in strange contrast, on one side the Frenchman in a tumble-down cottage, shivering, with long teeth, thin, feeding on snails and a handful of roots, but otherwise charmed with his lot, consoled by a republican cockade and humanitarian programmes: on the other, the Englishman, red and puffed out with fat, seated at his table in a comfortable room, before a dish of most juicy roast-beef, with a pot of foaming ale, busy in grumbling against the public distress and the traitorous ministers, who are going to ruin everything.

Thus Englishmen arrive on the threshold of the French Revolution, Conservatives and Christians facing the French free-thinkers and revolutionaries. Without knowing it, the two nations have rolled onwards for two centuries towards this terrible shock; without knowing it, they have only been working to aggravate it. All their effort, all their ideas, all their great men have accelerated the motion which hurls them towards the inevitable conflict. Hundred and fifty years of politeness and general ideas have persuaded the French to trust in human goodness and pure reason. Hundred and fifty years of moral reflection and political strife have attached the Englishman to positive religion and an established constitution. Each has his contrary dogma and his contrary enthusiasm. Neither understands the other, and each detests the other. What one calls renovation, the other calls destruction; what one reveres as the establishment of right, the other curses as the overthrow of right; what seems to one the annihilation of superstition, seems to the other the abolition of morality. Never was the contrast of two spirits and two civilisations marked in more manifest characters; and it was Burke who, with the superiority of a thinker and the hostility of an Englishman, took it in hand to show this to the French.

He is indignant at this 'tragi-comick farce,' which at Paris was called the regeneration of humanity. He denies that the contagion of

such folly can ever poison England. He laughs at the Cockneys, who, roused by the pratings of democratic societies, think themselves on the brink of a revolution:

'Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that of course, they are many in number; or that, after all, they are other than the little shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.'[1]

Real England hates and detests the maxims and actions of the French Revolution:[2]

'The very idea of the fabrication of a new government, is enough to fill us with disgust and horror. We wished . . . to derive all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers. . . . (We claim) our franchises not as the rights of men, but as the rights of Englishmen.'[3]

Our rights do not float in the air, in the imagination of philosophers; they are put down in Magna Charta:

'We have not been drawn and trussed, in order that we may be filled, like stuffed birds in a museum, with chaff and rags and paltry blurred shreds of paper about the rights of men.'[4]

We despise this abstract verbiage, which deprives man of all equity and respect to puff him up with presumption and theories. Our constitution is not a fictitious contract, like that of Rousseau, sure to be violated in three months, but a real contract, by which king, nobles, people, church, every one holds the others, and is himself held. The crown of the prince and the privilege of the noble are as sacred as the land of the peasant and the tool of the workman. Whatever be the acquisition or the inheritance, we respect it in every man, and our law has but one object, which is, to preserve to each his property and his rights.

'We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility.'[5]

'There is not one public man in this kingdom who does not reprobate the dishonest, perfidious, and cruel confiscation which the National Assembly has been compelled to make. . . . Church and State are ideas inseparable in our minds. . . . Our education is in a manner wholly in the hands of ecclesiasticks, and in all stages, from infancy to manhood. . . . They never will suffer the fixed estate of the church to be converted into a pension, to depend on the treasury. . . . They made their church like their nobility, independent. They can see without pain or grudging an archbishop precede a duke. They can see a Bishop of Durham or a Bishop of Winchester in possession of ten thousand a year.'[6]

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[1] E. Burke's Works, v. 165; *Reflections on the Revolution in France.*

[2] 'I almost venture to affirm, that not one in a hundred amongst us participates in the triumph of the revolution society.'—Burke's *Reflections*, v. 165.

[3] *Ibid.* 75. [4] *Ibid.* 166. [5] *Ibid.* 167. [6] *Ibid.* 188.

We will never suffer the established domain of our church to be converted into a pension, so as to place it in dependence on the treasury. We have made our church as our king and our nobility, independent. We are shocked at your robbery—first, because it is an outrage upon property; next, because it is an attack against religion. We hold that there exists no society without belief, and we feel that, in exhausting the source, you dry up the whole stream. We have rejected as a poison the infidelity which defiled the beginning of our century and of yours, and we have purged ourselves of it, whilst you have been saturated.

'Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, . . . and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers?'[1]

'We are Protestants, not from indifference, but from zeal.

'Atheism is against not only our reason, but our instincts.

'We are resolved to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater.'[2]

We settle our establishment upon the sentiment of right, and the sentiment of right on the respect for God.

In place of right and of God, what do you acknowledge as master? The sovereign people, that is, the arbitrary inconstancy of a counted majority. We deny that the majority has a right to re-create a constitution.

'The constitution of a country being once settled upon some compact, tacit or expressed, there is no power existing of force to alter it, without the breach of the covenant, or the consent of all the parties.'[3]

We deny that the majority has the right to make a constitution; unanimity must first have conferred this right on the majority. We deny that brute force is a legitimate authority, and that a populace is a nation.[4]

'A true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state or separable from it. . . . When great multitudes act together under that discipline of nature, I recognise the people; . . . when you separate the common sort of men from their proper chieftains so as to form them into an adverse army, I no longer know that venerable object called the people in such a disbanded race of deserters and vagabonds.'[5]

We detest with all our power of hatred the right of tyranny which you give them over others, and we detest still more the right of insur-

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[1] Burke's Works, v. 172; *Reflections.* [2] *Ibid.* 175.

[3] *Ibid.* vi. 201; *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

[4] 'A government of five hundred country attornies and obscure curates is not good for twenty-four millions of men, though it were chosen by eight and forty millions. . . . As to the share of power, authority, direction, which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society.'—Burke's Works, v. 109; *Reflections.*

[5] Burke's Works, vi. 219; *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

rection which you give them against themselves. We believe that a constitution is a deposit transmitted to this generation by the past, to be handed down to the future, and that if a generation can dispose of it as its own, it ought also to respect it as belonging to others. We hold that, 'by this unprincipled facility of changing the state as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies and fashions, the whole chain and continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer.'[1] We repudiate this meagre and coarse reason, which separates a man from his ties, and sees in him only the present, which separates a man from society, and counts him as only one head in a flock. We despise these 'metaphysics of an undergraduate and the mathematics of an exciseman,' by which you cut up the state and man's rights according to square miles and numerical unities. We have a horror of that cynical coarseness by which 'all the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off,' by which 'now a queen is but a woman, and a woman is but an animal,'[2] which cuts down chivalric and religious spirit, the two crowns of humanity, to plunge them, together with learning, into the popular mire, to be 'trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.'[3] We have a horror of this systematic levelling which disorganises civil society. Burke continues thus:

'I am satisfied beyond a doubt that the project of turning a great empire into a vestry, or into a collection of vestries, and of governing it in the spirit of a parochial administration, is senseless and absurd, in any mode, or with any qualifications. I can never be convinced, that the scheme of placing the highest powers of the state in churchwardens and constables, and other such officers, guided by the prudence of litigious attornies, and Jew brokers, and set in action by shameless women of the lowest condition, by keepers of hotels, taverns and brothels, by pert apprentices, by clerks, shop-boys, hairdressers, fiddlers, and dancers on the stage (who, in such a commonwealth as yours, will in future overbear, as already they have overborne, the sober incapacity of dull uninstructed men, of useful but laborious occupations), can never be put into any shape that must not be both disgraceful and destructive.'[4] 'If monarchy should ever obtain an entire ascendency in France, it will probably be . . . the most completely arbitrary power that has ever appeared on earth. France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors in assignats, . . . attornies, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people.'[5]

This is what Burke wrote in 1790 to the dawn of the French Revolution.[6] The year after the people of Birmingham destroyed the

[1] Burke's Works, v. 181; *Reflections.* [2] *Ibid.* 151. [3] *Ibid.* 154.
[4] *Ibid.* vi. 5; *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly.*
[5] *Ibid.* v. 349; *Reflections.*
[6] 'The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please: we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risk congratulations which

houses of English Jacobins, and the miners of Wednesbury went out in a body from their pits to come to the succour of 'king and church.' Crusade against crusade; scared England was as fanatical as enthusiastic France. Pitt declared that they could not 'treat with a nation of atheists.'[1] Burke said that the war was not between people and people, but between property and brute force. The rage of execration, invective, and destruction mounted on both sides like a conflagration.[2] It was not the collision of the two governments, but of the two civilisations and the two doctrines. The two vast machines, driven with all their momentum and velocity, met face to face, not by chance, but by fatality. A whole age of literature and philosophy had been necessary to amass the fuel which filled their sides, and laid down the rail which guided their course. In this thundering clash, amid these ebullitions of hissing and fiery vapour, in these red flames which grated around the boilers, and whirled with a rumbling noise upwards to the heavens, an attentive spectator may still discover the nature and the accumulation of the force which caused such an outburst, dislocated such iron plates, and strewed the ground with such ruins.

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may be soon turned into complaints. . . . Strange chaos of levity and ferocity, . . . monstrous tragi-comick scene. . . . After I have read the list of the persons and descriptions elected into the Tiers-Etat, nothing which they afterwards did could appear astonishing. . . . Of any practical experience in the state, not one man was to be found. The best were only men of theory. The majority was composed of practitioners in the law, . . . active chicaners, . . . obscure provincial advocates, stewards of petty local jurisdictions, country attornies, notaries, etc.' —Burke's *Reflections*, etc., v. 37 and 90. That which offends Burke, and even makes him very uneasy, was, that no representatives of the 'natural landed interests' were among the representatives of the *Tiers-Etat*. Let us give one quotation more, for really this political clairvoyance is akin to genius: 'Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. . . . Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.'

[1] Pitt's *Speeches*, 3 vols. 1808, ii. p. 81, on negotiating for peace with France, Jan. 26, 1795. Pitt says, however, in the same speech: 'God forbid that we should look on the body of the people of France as atheists.'—TR.

[2] *Letters to a Noble Lord; Letters on a Regicide Peace.*

CHAPTER IV.

Addison.

I. Addison and Swift in their epoch—Wherein they are alike and unlike.

II. The man—Education and culture—Latin verses—Voyage in France and Italy—*Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax*—*Remarks on Italy*—*Dialogues on Medals*—*Campaign*—Gentleness and kindness—Success and happiness.

III. Gravity and rationality—Solid studies and exact observation—His knowledge of men and business habits—Nobility of his character and conduct—Elevation of his morality and religion—How his life and character have contributed to the pleasantness and usefulness of his writings.

IV. The moralist—His essays are all moral—Against gross, sensual, or worldly life—This morality is practical, and yet commonplace and desultory—How it relies on reason and calculation—How it has for its end satisfaction in this world and happiness in the other—Speculative meanness of his religious conception—Practical excellence of his religious conception.

V. The writer—Harmony of morality and elegance—The style that suits men of the world—Merits of this style—Inconveniences—Addison as a critic—His judgment of *Paradise Lost*—Agreement of his art and criticism—Limits of classical criticism and art—What is lacking in the eloquence of Addison, of the Englishman and of the moralist.

VI. Grave pleasantry—Humour—Serious and fertile imagination—*Sir Roger de Coverley*—The religious and the poetical sentiment—*Vision of Mirza*—How the Germanic element subsists under Latin culture.

I.

IN this vast transformation of the minds which occupies the whole eighteenth century, and gives England its political and moral standing, two superior men appear in politics and morality, both accomplished writers—the most accomplished yet seen in England; both accredited mouthpieces of a party, masters in the art of persuasion and conviction; both limited in philosophy and art, incapable of considering sentiments in a disinterested fashion; always bent on seeing the motives of things, for approbation or blame; otherwise differing, and even in contrast with one another: one happy, kind, loved; the other hated, hating, and most unfortunate: the one a partisan of liberty and the noblest hopes of man; the other an advocate of a retrograde party, and an eager detractor of humanity: the one measured, delicate, furnishing a model of the most solid English qualities, perfected by continental culture; the other unbridled and formidable, showing an example of

the harshest English instincts, luxuriating without limit or rule in every kind of devastation and amid every degree of despair. To penetrate to the interior of this civilisation and this people, there are no means better than to pause and dwell upon Swift and Addison.

II.

'I have often reflected,' says Steele, 'after a night spent with him (Addison), apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature heightened with humour, more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed.'[1] And Pope, a rival of Addison, and a bitter rival, adds: 'His conversation had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man.'[2] These sayings express the whole talent of Addison: his writings are conversations, masterpieces of English urbanity and reason; nearly all the details of his character and life have contributed to nourish this urbanity and this reasonableness.

At the age of seventeen we find him at Oxford, studious and peaceful, loving solitary walks under the elm avenues, and amongst the beautiful meadows on the banks of the Cherwell. From the thorny brake of school education he chose the only flower—a withered one, doubtless, Latin verse—but one which, compared to the erudition, to the theology, to the logic of the time, is still a flower. He celebrates, in strophes or hexameters, the peace of Ryswick, or the system of Dr. Burnett; he composes little ingenious poems on a puppet-show, on the battle of the pigmies and cranes; he learns to praise and jest—in Latin, it is true—but with such success, that his verses recommend him for the rewards of the ministry, and even reach Boileau. At the same time he imbues himself with the Latin poets; he knows them by heart, even the most affected, Claudian and Prudentius; presently in Italy quotations will rain from his pen; from top to bottom, in all its nooks and under all its aspects, his memory is stuffed with Latin verses. We see that he loves them, scans them with delight, that a fine cæsura charms him, that every delicacy touches him, that no hue of art or emotion escapes him, that his literary tact is refined, and prepared to relish all the beauties of thought and expression. This inclination, too long retained, is a sign of a little mind, I allow; a man ought not to spend so much time in inventing cantos. Addison would have done better to enlarge his knowledge—to study Latin prose-writers, Greek literature, Christian antiquity, modern Italy, which he hardly knew. But this limited culture, leaving him weaker, made him more refined. He formed his art by studying only the monuments of Latin urbanity; he acquired a taste for the elegance and refinements, the triumphs and

[1] Addison's Works, ed. Hurd, 6 vols., v. 151; Steele's Letter to Mr. Congreve.
[2] *Ibid.* vi. 729.

artifices of style; he became self-contemplative, correct, capable of knowing and perfecting his own tongue. In the designed reminiscences, the happy allusions, the discreet tone of his own little poems, I find beforehand many traits of the *Spectator*.

Leaving the university, he travelled long in the two most polished countries in the world, France and Italy. He lived at Paris, in the house of the ambassador, in the regular and brilliant society which gave fashion to Europe; he visited Boileau, Malebranche; saw with somewhat malicious curiosity the fine curtsies of the painted and affected ladies of Versailles, the grace and almost stale civilities of the fine speakers and fine dancers of the other sex. He was amused at our complimentary intercourse, and remarked that in France, when a tailor accosted a shoemaker, he congratulated himself on the honour of saluting him. In Italy he admired the works of art, and praised them in a letter,[1] whose enthusiasm is rather cold, but very well expressed.[2] You see that he had the fine training which is now given to young men of the higher ranks. And it was not the amusements of Cockneys or the worry of taverns which employed him. His beloved Latin poets followed him everywhere. He had read them over before setting out; he recited their verses in the places which he mentions.

'I must confess, it was not one of the least entertainments that I met with in travelling, to examine these several descriptions, as it were, upon the spot, and to compare the natural face of the country with the landscapes that the poets have given us of it.'[3]

These were the pleasures of an epicure in literature; there could be nothing more literary and less pedantic than the account which he wrote on his return.[4] Presently this refined and delicate curiosity led him to coins. 'There is a great affinity,' he says, 'between them and poetry;' for they serve as a commentary upon ancient authors; an effigy of the Graces makes a verse of Horace visible. And on this subject he wrote a very agreeable dialogue, choosing for personages well-bred men:

'All three very well versed in the politer parts of learning, and had travelled into the most refined nations of Europe. . . . Their design was to pass away the heat of the summer among the fresh breezes that rise from the river (the Thames), and the agreeable mixture of shades and fountains in which the whole country naturally abounds.'[5]

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[1] A Letter to Lord Halifax (1701), i. 29.

[2] 'Renowned in verse, each shady thicket grows,
And every stream in heavenly numbers flows. . . .
Where the smooth chisel all its force has shown,
And softened into flesh the rugged stone. . . .
Here pleasing airs my ravisht soul confound
With circling notes and labyrinths of sound.'—*Ibid.*

[3] Preface to *Remarks on Italy*, i. 358.

[4] *Remarks on Italy.*

[5] *First Dialogue on Medals*, i. 255.

Then, with a gentle and well-tempered gaiety, he laughs at pedants who waste life in discussing the Latin toga or sandal, but pointed out, like a man of taste and wit, the services which coins might render to history and the arts. Was there ever a better education for a literary man of the world? He had already for a long time acquired the art of fashionable poetry, I mean the correct verses, which are complimentary, or written to order. In all polished society we look for the adornment of thought; we desire for it rare, brilliant, beautiful dress, to distinguish it from vulgar thoughts, and for this reason we impose upon it rhyme, metre, noble expression; we make for it a store of select terms, true metaphors, suitable images, which are like an aristocratic wardrobe, in which it is hampered but must adorn itself. Men of wit are bound to make verses for it, and in a certain style; others to display their lace, and after a certain pattern. Addison put on this dress, and wore it correctly and easily, passing without difficulty from one habit to another similar, from Latin to English verse. His principal piece, *The Campaign*,[1] is an excellent model of becoming and classical style. Each verse is full, perfect in itself, with a clever antithesis, or a good epithet, or a figure of abbreviation. Countries have noble names; Italy is Ausonia, the Black Sea is the Scythian Sea; there are mountains of dead, and a thunder of eloquence sanctioned by Lucian; pretty turns of oratorical address imitated from Ovid; cannons are mentioned in poetic periphrases as later in Delille.[2] The poem is an official and decorative amplification, like that which Voltaire wrote afterwards on Fontenoy. Addison does yet better; he wrote an opera, a comedy, a much admired tragedy on the death of Cato. Such writing was always, in the last century, a passport to employ good style and to enter fashionable society. A young man in Voltaire's time, on leaving college, had to write his tragedy, as now he must write an article on political economy; it was then a proof that he could converse with ladies, as now it is a proof that he can argue with men. He learned the art of being amusing, of touching, of talking of love; he thus escaped from dry or special studies; he could choose among events or sentiments those which will interest or please; he was able to hold his own in good company, to be sometimes agreeable there, never to transgress. Such is the culture which these works gave Addison; it is of slight import-

[1] On the victory of Blenheim.

[2] 'With floods of gore . . . the rivers swell . . .
Mountains of dead.
Rows of hollow brass
Tube behind tube the dreadful entrance keep,
Whilst in their wombs ten thousand thunders sleep. . . .
. . . Here shattered walls, like broken rocks, from far
Rise up in hideous views, the guilt of war;
Whilst here the vine o'er hills of ruin climbs
Industrious to conceal great Bourbon's crimes.'

ance that they are poor. In them he dealt with passions, humour; he produced in his opera some lively and smiling images; in his tragedy some noble or moving accents; he emerged from reasoning and pure dissertation; he acquired the art of rendering morality visible and truth expressive; he knew how to give ideas a physiognomy, and that an attractive one. Thus was the finished writer perfected by contact with ancient and modern, foreign and national urbanity, by the sight of the fine arts, by experience of the world and study of style, by continuous and delicate choice of all that is agreeable in things and men, in life and art.

His politeness received from his character a singular bent and charm. It was not external, simply voluntary and official; it came from the heart. He was gentle and kind, of a refined sensibility, so timid even as to remain quiet and seem dull in a numerous company or before strangers, only recovering his spirits before intimate friends, and confessing that he could not talk well to more than one. He could not endure a sharp discussion; when the opponent was intractable, he pretended to approve, and for punishment, plunged him discreetly into his own folly. He withdrew by preference from political arguments; being invited to deal with them in the *Spectator*, he contented himself with inoffensive and general subjects, which could interest all whilst shocking none. He would have suffered in making others suffer. Though a very decided and faithful Whig, he continued moderate in polemics; and in a time when conquerors legally attempted to assassinate or ruin the conquered, he confined himself to show the faults of argument made by the Tories, or to rail courteously at their prejudices. At Dublin he went first of all to shake the hand of Swift, his great and fallen adversary. Insulted bitterly by Dennis and Pope, he refused to employ against them his influence or his wit, and praised Pope to the end. What could be more touching, when we have read his life, than his essay on kindness? we perceive that he is unconsciously speaking of himself:

'There is no society or conversation to be kept up in the world without good-nature, or something which must bear its appearance, and supply its place. For this reason mankind have been forced to invent a kind of artificial humanity, which is what we express by the word good-breeding. . . . The greatest wits I have conversed with are men eminent for their humanity. . . . Good-nature is generally born with us; health, prosperity, and kind treatment from the world are great cherishers of it where they find it.'[1]

It so happens that he is involuntarily describing his own charm and his own success. It is himself that he is unveiling; he was very prosperous, and his good fortune spread itself around him in affectionate sentiments, in constant discretion, in calm cheerfulness. At college he was distinguished; his Latin verses made him a fellow at Oxford; he

[1] *Spectator*, No. 169.

spent ten years there in grave amusements and the studies which pleased him. From the age of twenty-two, Dryden, the prince of literature, praised him splendidly. When he left Oxford, the ministers gave him a pension of three hundred pounds to finish his education, and prepare him for public service. On his return from his travels, his poem on Blenheim placed him in the first rank of the Whigs. He became a member of Parliament, twice Secretary for Ireland, Under-Secretary of State, Secretary of State. Party hatred spared him; amid the almost universal defeat of the Whigs, he was re-elected; in the furious war of Whigs and Tories, both united to applaud his tragedy of *Cato;* the most cruel pamphleteers respected him; his uprightness, his talent, seemed exalted by common consent above discussion. He lived in abundance, activity, and honours, wisely and usefully, amid the assiduous admiration and constant affection of learned and distinguished friends, who could never have too much of his conversation, amid the applause of all the good men and all the cultivated minds of England. If twice the fall of his party seemed to destroy or retard his fortune, he maintained his position without much effort, by reflection and coolness, prepared for all that might happen, accepting mediocrity, confirmed in a natural and acquired calmness, accommodating himself without yielding to men, respectful to the great without degrading himself, free from secret revolt or internal suffering. These are the sources of his talent; could any be purer or finer? could anything be more engaging than worldly polish and elegance, without the factitious ardour and the complimentary falseness of the world? And will you look for a more amiable conversation than that of a good and happy man, whose knowledge, taste, and wit are only employed to give you pleasure?

III.

This pleasure will be useful to you. Your interlocutor is as grave as he is polite; he would and can instruct as well as amuse you; his education has been as solid as it has been elegant; he even confesses in the *Spectator* that he prefers the serious to the funny style. He is naturally reflective, silent, attentive. He has studied literature, men, and things, with the conscientiousness of a scholar and an observer. When he travelled in Italy, it was in the English style, noting the difference of manners, the peculiarities of the soil, the good and ill effects of various governments; storing himself with concise reminiscences, circumstantial mementoes on taxes, buildings, minerals, atmosphere, harbours, administration, and I cannot say how many other things.[1] An English lord, who travels in Holland, goes simply into a cheese-shop, in order to see for himself all the stages of the manufacture; he returns, like Addison, provided with exact statistics, complete notes: this mass of verified information is the foundation of the common sense of English-

[1] See, for instance, his chapter on the Republic of San Marino.

men. Addison added to it experience of business, having been successively, or at the same time, a journalist, a member of Parliament, a statesman, hand and heart in all the fights and chances of party. Mere literary education only makes good talkers, able to adorn and publish ideas which they do not possess, and which others furnish for them. If writers wish to invent, they must look to events and men, not to books and drawing-rooms; the conversation of special men is more useful to them than the study of perfect periods; they cannot think for themselves, but in so far as they have lived or acted. Addison knew how to act and live. When we read his reports, letters, and discussions, we feel that politics and government have given him half his mind. To exercise patronage, to handle money, to interpret the law, to divine the motives of men, to foresee the changes of public opinion, to be compelled to judge rightly, quickly, and twenty times a day, on present and great interests, under the inspection of the public and the espionnage of enemies; all this nourished his reason and sustained his discourses. Such a man might judge and counsel his fellows; his judgments were not amplifications arranged by a process of the brain, but observations controlled by experience: he might be listened to on moral subjects as a physician was on physical subjects; we could feel that he spoke with authority, and that we were instructed.

After having listened a little, people felt themselves better; for they recognised in him from the first a singularly elevated soul, very pure, so much attached to uprightness that he made it his constant and his dearest pleasure. He naturally loved beauty, kindness and justice, science and liberty. From an early age he had joined the Liberal party, and he continued in it to the end, hoping the best of human virtue and reason, noting the wretchedness into which people fell who abandoned their dignity with their independence.[1] He followed the lofty discoveries of the new physical sciences, so as to raise still more the idea which he had of God's work. He loved the deep and serious emotions which reveal to us the nobility of our nature and the infirmity of our condition. He employed his talent and all his writings in giving us the notion of what we are worth, and of what we are to be. Of two

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[1] Letter from Italy to Lord Halifax:

'O Liberty, thou Goddess heavenly bright,
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling plenty leads thy wanton train. . . .
'Tis liberty that crowns Britannia's isle,
And makes her barren rocks and her bleak mountains smile.'

About the Republic of San Marino he writes:

'Nothing can be a greater instance of the natural love that mankind has for liberty, and of their aversion to an arbitrary government, than such a savage mountain covered with people, and the Campania of Rome, which lies in the same country, almost destitute of inhabitants.'—*Remarks on Italy*, i. 406.

tragedies which he composed or contemplated, one was on the death of Cato, the most virtuous of the Romans; the other on that of Socrates, the most virtuous of the Greeks. At the end of the first he felt some scruples; and for fear of excusing suicide, he gave Cato some remorse. His opera of *Rosamond* was finished with the injunction to prefer pure love to forbidden joys; the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, the *Guardian*, are mere lay sermons. Moreover, he practised his maxims. When he was in office, his integrity was perfect; he served men—often those whom he did not know—always gratuitously, refusing even disguised presents. When out of office, his loyalty was perfect; he maintained his opinions and friendships without bitterness or baseness, boldly praising his fallen protectors,[1] fearing not thereby to expose himself to the loss of his only remaining resources. He was naturally noble, and he was so rationally. He considered that there is common sense in honesty. His first care, as he said, was to range his passions on the side of truth. He had made for himself a portrait of a rational creature, and he made his conduct conformable to this by reflection as much as by instinct. He rested every virtue on an order of principles and proofs. His logic fed his morality, and the uprightness of his mind carried out the justice of his heart. His religion, English in every sense, was after the like fashion. He rested his faith on a regular succession of historical discussions:[2] he established the existence of God by a regular succession of moral deductions; minute and solid demonstration was throughout the guide and author of his beliefs and emotions. Thus disposed, he loved to conceive God as the rational head of the world; he transformed accidents and necessities into calculations and directions; he saw order and providence in the conflict of things, and felt around him the wisdom which he attempted to establish in himself. He trusted in God as a good and just being, who felt himself in the hands of a good and just being. He lived willingly in his knowledge and presence, and thought of the unknown future which was to complete human nature and accomplish moral order. When the end came, he went over his life, and discovered that he had done some wrong or other to Gay: this wrong was doubtless slight, since Gay had no suspicion of it. Addison begged him to come to his bedside, and asked his pardon. When he was about to die, he wished still to be useful, and sent for his son-in-law, Lord Warwick, whose levity had disturbed him more than once. He was so weak that at first he could not speak. The young man, after waiting a while, said to him: 'Dear Sir, you sent for me, I believe; I hope that you have some commands; I shall hold them most sacred.' The dying man with an effort pressed his hand, and replied gently: 'See in what peace a Christian can die.'[3] Shortly afterwards he expired.

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[1] Halifax, for instance.

[2] *Of the Christian Religion.*

[3] Addison's Works, vi. 525.

IV.

'The great and only end of these speculations,' says Addison, in a number of the *Spectator*, 'is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain.' And he kept his word. His papers are wholly moral—advice to families, reprimands to thoughtless women, a portrait of an honest man, remedies for the passions, reflections on God, the future life. I hardly know, or rather I know very well, what success a newspaper full of sermons would have in France. In England it was extraordinary, equal to that of the most fortunate modern novelists. In the general disaster of the reviews, ruined by the Stamp Act, the *Spectator* doubled its price, and held its ground. This was because it offered to Englishmen the picture of English reason: the talent and the teaching were in harmony with the needs of the age and of the country. Let us endeavour to describe this reason, which was gradually eliminated from Puritanism and its rigidity, from the Restoration and its excess. The mind attained its balance together with religion and the state. It conceived the rule, and disciplined its conduct; it diverged from a life of excess, and confirmed itself in a sensible life; it shunned physical and prescribed moral existence. Addison rejects with scorn gross corporeal pleasure, the brutal joy of noise and motion:

'I would nevertheless leave to the consideration of those who are the patrons of this monstrous trial of skill, whether or no they are not guilty, in some measure, of an affront to their species, in treating after this manner the human face divine.'[1]

'Is it possible that human nature can rejoice in its disgrace, and take pleasure in seeing its own figure turned to ridicule, and distorted into forms that raise horror and aversion? There is something disingenuous and immoral in the being able to bear such a sight.'[2]

Of course he sets himself against licence without artlessness and the systematic debauchery which was the taste and the shame of the Restoration. He wrote whole articles against young fashionable men, 'a sort of vermin' who fill London with their bastards; against professional seducers, who are the 'knights-errant' of vice.

'When men of rank and figure pass away their lives in these criminal pursuits and practices, they ought to consider that they render themselves more vile and despicable than any innocent man can be, whatever low station his fortune or birth have placed him in.'[3]

He severely jeers at women who expose themselves to temptations, and whom he calls 'salamanders:'

'A salamander is a kind of heroine in chastity, that treads upon fire, and lives in the midst of flames without being hurt. A salamander knows no distinction of sex in those she converses with, grows familiar with a stranger at first sight, and is not so narrow-spirited as to observe whether the person she talks to be in breeches

[1] *Spectator*, No. 173. [2] *Tatler*, No. 108. [3] *Guardian*, No. 123.

or petticoats. She admits a male visitant to her bedside, plays with him a whole afternoon at picquet, walks with him two or three hours by moonlight.'[1]

He fights like a preacher against the fashion of low dresses, and gravely demands the tucker and modesty of old times:

'To prevent these saucy familiar glances, I would entreat my gentle readers to sew on their tuckers again, to retrieve the modesty of their characters, and not to imitate the nakedness, but the innocence, of their mother Eve. In short, modesty gives the maid greater beauty than even the bloom of youth; it bestows on the wife the dignity of a matron, and reinstates the widow in her virginity.'[2]

You will find, further on, lectures on the masquerades, which end with a rendezvous; precepts on the number of glasses people might drink, and the dishes of which they might eat; condemnations of licentious professors of irreligion and immorality; all maxims now somewhat stale, but then new and useful, because Wycherley and Rochester had put the opposite maxims into use and credit. Debauchery passed for French and fashionable: this is why Addison proscribes in addition all French frivolities. He laughs at women who receive visitors in their dressing-rooms, and speak aloud at the theatre:

'There is nothing which exposes a woman to greater dangers, than that gaiety and airiness of temper, which are natural to most of the sex. It should be therefore the concern of every wise and virtuous woman to keep this sprightliness from degenerating into levity. On the contrary, the whole discourse and behaviour of the French is to make the sex more fantastical, or (as they are pleased to term it) more awakened, than is consistent either with virtue or discretion.'[3]

You see already in these strictures the portrait of the sensible housewife, the modest English wife, domestic and grave, taken up with her husband and children. Addison returns a score of times to the artifices, the pretty affected babyisms, the coquetry, the futilities of women. He cannot suffer languishing or lazy habits. He is full of epigrams, written against flirtations, extravagant toilets, useless visits.[4] He writes a satirical journal of a man who goes to his club, learns the news, yawns, studies the barometer, and thinks his time well occupied. He considers that our time is a capital, our business a duty, and our life a task.

Only a task. If he holds himself superior to sensual life, he is inferior to philosophical life. His morality, thoroughly English, always crawls among commonplaces, discovering no principles, making no deductions. The fine and lofty aspects of the mind are wanting. He gives inimitable advice, a clear watchword, justified by what happened yesterday, useful for to-morrow. He observes that fathers must not be inflexible, and that they often repent driving their children to despair. He finds that bad books are pernicious, because their endurance carries their poison to future ages. He consoles a woman

[1] *Spectator*, No. 198.
[2] *Guardian*, No. 100.
[3] *Spectator*, No. 45.
[4] *Ibid.* Nos. 317 and 323.

who has lost her sweetheart, by showing her the misfortunes of so many other people who are suffering the greatest evils at the same time. His *Spectator* is only an honest man's manual, and is often like the *Complete Lawyer*. It is practical, its aim being not to amuse, but to correct us. The conscientious Protestant, nourished with dissertations and morality, demands an effectual monitor and guide; he would like his reading to influence his conduct, and his newspaper to suggest a resolution. To this end Addison seeks motives everywhere. He thinks of the future life, but does not forget the present; he rests virtue on interest, rightly understood. He strains no principle to its limits; he accepts them all, as they are to be met with in the human domain, according to their manifest goodness, tracing only the primary consequences, shunning the powerful logical pressure which spoils all by expressing too much. See him establishing a maxim, recommending constancy for instance; his motives are mixed and incongruous: first, inconstancy exposes us to scorn; next, it puts us in continual distraction; again, it hinders us as a rule from attaining our end; moreover, it is the great feature of every human and mortal being; finally, it is most opposed to the inflexible nature of God, who ought to be our model. The whole is illustrated at the close by a quotation from Dryden and a verse from Horace. This medley and jumble describe the ordinary mind which remains on the level of its audience, and the practical mind, which knows how to dominate over its audience. Addison persuades the public, because he draws from the public sources of belief. He is powerful because he is vulgar, and useful because he is narrow.

Picture now this mind, so characteristically mediocre, limited to the discovery of good motives of action. What a reflective man, always equal and dignified! What a store he has of resolutions and maxims! All rapture, instinct, inspiration, and caprice, are abolished or disciplined. No case surprises or carries him away. He is always ready and protected; so much so, that he is like an automaton. Argument has frozen and invaded him. See, for instance, how he puts us on our guard against involuntary hypocrisy, announcing, explaining, distinguishing the ordinary and extraordinary modes, dragging on with exordiums, preparations, methods, allusions to Scripture.[1] After six lines of this morality, a Frenchman would go out for a mouthful of fresh air. What in the name of heaven would he do, if, in order to move him to piety, he was told[2] that God's omniscience and omnipresence furnished us with three kinds of motives, and then subdivided these motives into first, second, and third? To put calculation at every stage; to come with weight and figures into the thick of human passions, to ticket them, classify them like bales, to tell the public that the inventory is complete; to lead them, with the reckoning in their hand, and by the mere virtue of statistics, to honour and duty,—such is

[1] *Spectator*, No. 399.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 571.

the morality of Addison and of England. It is a sort of commercial common sense applied to the interests of the soul; a preacher here is only an economist in a white tie, who treats conscience like food, and refutes vice as a set of prohibitions.

There is nothing sublime or chimerical in the end which he sets before us; all is practical, that is, business-like and sensible: the question is, How 'to be easy here and happy afterwards.' To be easy is a word which has no French equivalent, meaning that comfortable state of the mind, a means of calm satisfaction, approved action and serene conscience. Addison makes it consist in labour and manly functions, carefully and regularly discharged. We must see with what complacency he paints in the *Freeholder* and *Sir Roger* the grave pleasures of a citizen and proprietor:

'I have rather chosen this title (the Freeholder) than any other, because it is what I most glory in, and what most effectually calls to my mind the happiness of that government under which I live. As a British freeholder, I should not scruple taking place of a French marquis; and when I see one of my countrymen amusing himself in his little cabbage-garden, I naturally look upon him as a greater person than the owner of the richest vineyard in Champagne. . . . There is an unspeakable pleasure in calling anything one's own. A freehold, though it be but in ice and snow, will make the owner pleased in the possession, and stout in the defence of it. . . . I consider myself as one who give my consent to every law which passes. . . . A freeholder is but one remove from a legislator, and for that reason ought to stand up in the defence of those laws which are in some degree of his own making.'[1]

These are all English feelings, made up of calculation and pride, energetic and austere; and this portrait is capped by that of the married man:

'Nothing is more gratifying to the mind of man than power or dominion; and this I think myself amply possessed of, as I am the father of a family. I am perpetually taken up in giving out orders, in prescribing duties, in hearing parties, in administering justice, and in distributing rewards and punishments. . . . I look upon my family as a patriarchal sovereignty, in which I am myself both king and priest. . . . When I see my little troop before me, I rejoice in the additions I have made to my species, to my country, and to my religion, in having produced such a number of reasonable creatures, citizens, and Christians. I am pleased to see myself thus perpetuated; and as there is no production comparable to that of a human creature, I am more proud of having been the occasion of ten such glorious productions, than if I had built a hundred pyramids at my own expense, or published as many volumes of the finest wit and learning.'[2]

If now you take the man away from his estate and his household, alone with himself, in moments of idleness or reverie, you will find him just as positive. He observes, that he may cultivate his own reasoning power, and that of others; he stores himself with morality; he wishes to make the most of himself and of existence. The northern races willingly direct their thoughts to final dissolution and the dark

[1] *Freeholder*, No. 1.

[2] *Spectator*, No. 500.

future. Addison often chose for his promenade gloomy Westminster Abbey, with its many tombs:

'Upon my going into the church I entertained myself with the digging of a grave; and saw in every shovel-full of it that was thrown up, the fragment of a bone or skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering earth that some time or other had a place in the composition of an human body. . . . I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries and make our appearance together.'[1]

And suddenly his emotion is transformed into profitable meditations. Under his morality is a balance which weighs the quantities of happiness. He stirs himself by mathematical comparisons to prefer the future to the present. He tries to realise, amidst an assemblage of dates, the disproportion of our short life to infinity. Thus arises this religion, a product of melancholic temperament and acquired logic, in which man, a sort of calculating Hamlet, aspires to the ideal by making a good business of it, and maintains his poetical sentiments by financial additions.

In such a subject these habits are offensive. We ought not to try and over-define or prove God; religion is rather a matter of feeling than of science; we compromise it by exacting too rigorous demonstrations, and too precise dogmas. It is the heart which sees heaven; if you would make me believe in it, as you make me believe in the Antipodes, by geographical accounts and probabilities, I shall barely or not at all believe. Addison has little more than his college arguments or edification, very like those of the Abbé Pluche,[2] which let in objections at every cleft, and which we can only regard as dialectical essays, or sources of emotion. Add the motives of interest and calculations of prudence, which can make recruits, but not converts; these are his proofs. There is an element of coarseness in this fashion of treating divine things, and we like still less the exactness with which he explains God, reducing him to a mere magnified man. This preciseness and this narrowness go so far as to describe heaven:

'Though the Deity be thus essentially present through all the immensity of space, there is one part of it in which he discovers himself in a most transcendent and visible glory. . . . It is here where the glorified body of our Saviour resides, and where all the celestial hierarchies, and the innumerable hosts of angels, are represented as perpetually surrounding the seat of God with hallelujahs and hymns of praise. . . . With how much skill must the throne of God be erected! . . . How great must be the majesty of that place, where the whole art of creation has been employed, and where God has chosen to shew himself in the most magnificent manner! What must be the architecture of infinite power under the direction of infinite wisdom!'[3]

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[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 26 and 575.

[2] The Abbé Pluche (1688–1761) was the author of a *Système de la Nature* and several other works.—Tr.

[3] *Spectator*, No. 580; see also No. 531.

Moreover, the place must be very grand, and they have music there: it is a noble palace; perhaps there are antechambers. Enough; I will not continue. The same dull and literal precision makes him inquire what sort of happiness the elect have.[1] They will be admitted into the councils of Providence, and will understand all its proceedings:

'There is, doubtless, a faculty in spirits by which they apprehend one another as our senses do material objects; and there is no question but our souls, when they are disembodied, or placed in glorified bodies, will by this faculty, in whatever part of space they reside, be always sensible of the Divine Presence.'[2]

This grovelling philosophy repels you. One word of Addison will justify it, and make you understand it: 'The business of mankind in this life is rather to act than to know.' Now, such a philosophy is as useful in action as flat in science. All its faults of speculation become merits in practice. It follows in a prosy manner positive religion.[3] What support does it not attain from the authority of an ancient tradition, a national institution, an established priesthood, visible ceremonies, every-day customs! It employs as arguments public utility, the example of great minds, heavy logic, literal interpretation, and unmistakeable texts. What better means of governing the crowd, than to degrade proofs to the vulgarity of its intelligence and needs? It humanises the Divinity: is it not the only way to make men understand him? It defines almost obviously a future life: is it not the only way to cause it to be wished for? The poetry of high philosophical deductions is weak beside the inner persuasion, rooted by so many positive and detailed descriptions. In this way an active piety is born; and religion thus constructed doubles the force of the moral spring. Addison's is admirable, because it is so strong. Energy of feeling rescues wretchedness of dogma. Beneath his dissertations we feel that he is moved: minutiæ, pedantry disappear. We see in him now only a soul deeply penetrated with adoration and respect; no more a preacher classifying God's attributes, and pursuing his trade as a good logician; but a man who naturally, and of his own bent, returns to a lofty spectacle, goes with awe into all its aspects, and leaves it only with a renewed or overwhelmed heart. The sincerity of his emotions makes us respect even his catechetical prescriptions. He demands fixed days of devotion and meditation to recall us regularly to the thought of our Creator and of our faith. He inserts prayers in his paper. He forbids oaths, and recommends to keep always before us the idea of a sovereign Master:

'Such an habitual homage to the Supreme Being would, in a particular manner, banish from among us that prevailing impiety of using his name on the most trivial occasions. . . . What can we then think of those who make use of so tremendous a name in the ordinary expressions of their anger, mirth, and most

[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 237, 571, 600.
[2] *Ibid.* No. 571; see also Nos. 237, 600.
[3] *Tatler*, No. 257.

impertinent passions? of those who admit it into the most familiar questions and assertions, ludicrous phrases, and works of humour? not to mention those who violate it by solemn perjuries! It would be an affront to reason to endeavour to set forth the horror and profaneness of such a practice.'[1]

A Frenchman, at the first word, hearing himself forbidden to swear, would probably laugh; in his eyes that is a matter of good taste, not of morality. But if he had heard Addison himself pronouncing what I have written, he would laugh no more.

V.

It is no small thing to make morality fashionable. Addison did it, and it remained in fashion. Formerly honest men were not polished, and polished men were not honest; piety was fanatical, and urbanity depraved; in manners, as in letters, one could meet only Puritans or libertines. For the first time Addison reconciled virtue with elegance, taught duty in an accomplished style, and made pleasure subservient to reason:

'It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses. I would therefore, in a very particular manner, recommend these my speculations to all well-regulated families, and set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea-equipage.'[2]

In this you may detect an inclination to smile; it is the tone of a polished man, who, at the first sign of ennui, turns round, delicately laughs at himself, and tries to please. It is Addison's general tone.

What an art it is to please! First, the art of making oneself understood, at once, always, completely, without difficulty to the reader, without reflection, without attention. Figure to yourself men of the world reading a page between two mouthfuls of 'bohea-rolls,' ladies interrupting a phrase to ask when the ball begins: three special or learned words would make them throw the paper down. They only desire clear terms, in common use, into which wit enters all at once, as it enters ordinary converse; in fact, for them reading is only a conversation, and a better one than usual. For the select world refines language. It does not suffer the risks and approximations of extempore and inexperienced speaking. It requires a knowledge of style, like a knowledge of external forms. It will have exact words to express the fine shades of thought, and measured words to preclude shocking or extreme impressions. It wishes for developed phrases, which, presenting the same idea, under several aspects, may impress it easily upon its desultory mind. It demands harmonies of words, which, presenting a known

[1] *Spectator*, No. 531. [2] *Ibid.* No. 10.

idea in a smart form, may introduce it in a lively manner to its desultory imagination. Addison gives it all that it desires; his writings are the pure source of classical style; men never spoke in England better. Ornaments abound, and rhetoric has no part in them. Throughout we have just contrasts, which serve only for clearness, and are not too much prolonged; happy expressions, easily discovered, which give things a new and ingenious turn; harmonious periods, in which the sounds flow into one another with the diversity and sweetness of a quiet stream; a fertile vein of inventions and images, through which runs the most amiable irony. We trust one example will suffice:

'He is not obliged to attend her (Nature) in the slow advances which she makes from one season to another, or to observe her conduct in the successive production of plants and flowers. He may draw into his description all the beauties of the spring and autumn, and make the whole year contribute something to render it the more agreeable. His rose-trees, woodbines, and jessamines may flower together, and his beds be covered at the same time with lilies, violets, and amaranths. His soil is not restrained to any particular set of plants, but is proper either for oaks or myrtles, and adapts itself to the products of every climate. Oranges may grow wild in it; myrrh may be met with in every hedge; and if he thinks it proper to have a grove of spices, he can quickly command sun enough to raise it. If all this will not furnish out any agreeable scene, he can make several new species of flowers, with richer scents and higher colours, than any that grow in the gardens of nature. His concerts of birds may be as full and harmonious, and his woods as thick and gloomy as he pleases. He is at no more expense in a long vista than a short one, and can as easily throw his cascades from a precipice of half a mile high as from one of twenty yards. He has his choice of the winds, and can turn the course of his rivers in all the variety of meanders that are most delightful to the reader's imagination.'[1]

I find here that Addison profits by the rights which he accords, and is amused in explaining to us how we may amuse ourselves. Such is the charming tone of society. Reading this book, we fancy it still more amiable than it is: no pretension; no efforts; endless contrivances employed unconsciously, and obtained without asking; the gift of being lively and agreeable; a refined banter, raillery without bitterness, a sustained gaiety; the art of finding in everything the most blooming and the freshest flower, and to smell it without bruising or sullying it; science, politics, experience, morality, bearing their finest fruits, adorning them, offering them at a chosen moment, ready to withdraw them as soon as conversation has received the flavour, and before it is tired of them; ladies placed in the first rank,[2] arbiters of refinement, surrounded with homage, crowning the politeness of men and the brilliancy of society by the attraction of their toilettes, the delicacy of their wit, and the charm of their smiles;—such is the familiar spectacle in which the writer has formed and delighted himself.

So many advantages are not without their inconvenience. The

[1] *Spectator*, No. 418.

[2] *Ibid.* Nos. 423, 265.

compliments of society, which attenuate expressions, blunt the style; by regulating what is instinctive and moderating what is vehement, they make speech threadbare and uniform. We must not always seek to please, above all, the ear. Monsieur Chateaubriand boasted of not admitting a single elision into the song of *Cymodocée;* so much the worse for *Cymodocée.* So the commentators who have noted in Addison the balance of his periods, do him an injustice.[1] They explain why he slightly wearies us. The rotundity of his phrases is a scanty merit, and mars the rest. To calculate longs and shorts, to be always thinking of sounds, of final cadences,—all these classical researches spoil a writer. Every idea has its accent, and all our labour ought to be to make it free and simple on paper, as it is in our mind. We ought to copy and mark our thought with the flow of emotions and images, which raise it, caring for nothing but its exactness and clearness. One true phrase is worth a hundred periods: the first is a document which fixes for ever a movement of the heart or the senses; the other is a toy to amuse the empty heads of verse-makers. I would give twenty pages of Fléchier for three lines of Saint-Simon. Regular rhythm mutilates the impetus of natural invention; the shades of inner vision vanish; we see no more a soul which thinks or feels, but fingers which scan. The continuous period is like the shears of La Quintinie,[2] which crop all the trees round, under pretence of beautifying. This is why there is a coldness and monotony in Addison's style. He seems to be listening to himself. He is too measured and correct. His most touching stories, like that of *Theodosius and Constantia*, touch us only partially. Who could feel inclined to weep over such periods as these?

'Constantia, who knew that nothing but the report of her marriage could have driven him to such extremities, was not to be comforted: she now accused herself for having so tamely given an ear to the proposal of a husband, and looked upon the new lover as the murderer of Theodosius: in short, she resolved to suffer the utmost effects of her father's displeasure, rather than to comply with a marriage which appeared to her so full of guilt and horror.'[3]

Is this the way to paint horror and guilt? Where are the motions of passion which Addison pretends to paint? The story is related, not seen.

The classic simply cannot see. Always measured and rational, his first care is to proportion and arrange. He has his rules in his pocket, and brings them out for everything. He does not rise to the source of the beautiful at once, like genuine artists, by force and lucidity of

[1] See, in the notes of No. 409 of the *Spectator*, the pretty minute analysis of Hurd, the decomposition of the period, the proportion of long and short syllables, the study of the finals. A musician could not have done better.

[2] La Quintinie (1626–1688) was a celebrated gardener under Louis XIV., and planned the gardens of Versailles.

[3] *Spectator*, No. 164.

natural inspiration; he lingers in the middle regions, amid precepts, subject to taste and common sense. This is why Addison's criticism is so solid and so poor. They who seek ideas will do well not to read his *Essays on Imagination*,[1] so much praised, so well written, but so scant of philosophy, and so commonplace, dragged down by the intervention of final causes. His celebrated commentary on *Paradise Lost* is little better than the dissertations of Batteux and Bossu. In one place he compares, almost in a line, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid. The fine arrangement of a poem is with him the best merit. The pure classics enjoy better arrangement and good order than artless truth and strong originality. They have always their poetic manual in their hands: if you agree with the pattern of to-day, you have genius; if not, not. Addison, in praise of Milton, establishes that, according to the rule of epic poetry, the action of *Paradise Lost* is one, complete and great; that its characters are varied and of universal interest, and its sentiments natural, appropriate, and elevated; the style clear, diversified, and sublime. Now you may admire Milton; he has a testimonial from Aristotle. Listen, for instance, to cold details of classical dissertation:

'Had I followed Monsieur Bossu's method in my first paper on Milton, I should have dated the action of *Paradise Lost* from the beginning of Raphael's speech in this book.'[2]

'But, notwithstanding the fineness of this allegory (Sin and Death) may atone for it (the defect in the subject of his poem) in some measure, I cannot think that persons of such a chimerical existence are proper actors in an epic poem.'[3]

Further on he defines poetical machines, the conditions of their structure, the advantage of their use. He seems to me a carpenter verifying the construction of a staircase. Do not suppose that artificiality shocks him; he rather admires it. He finds the violent declamations of the Miltonic divinity and the royal compliments, indulged in by the persons of the Trinity, sublime. The campaigns of the angels, their bearing in chapel and barrack, their scholastic disputes, their bitter puritanical or pious royalistic style, do not strike him as false or disagreeable. Adam's pedantry and household lectures appear to him suitable to the state of innocence. In fact, the classics of the last two centuries never looked upon the human mind, except in its cultivated state. The child, the artist, the barbarian, the inspired man, escaped them; so, of course, did all who were beyond humanity: their world was limited to the earth, and to the earth of the study and drawing-rooms; they rose neither to God nor nature, or if they did, it was to transform nature into a narrow garden, and God into a moral scrutator. They reduced genius to eloquence, poetry to discourse, the drama to a dialogue. They regarded beauty as if it were reason, a sort of middle faculty, not apt for invention, potent in rules, balancing imagination like conduct, and making taste the arbiter of

[1] See *Spectator*, No. 411–No. 432. [2] *Ibid.* No. 327. [3] *Ibid.* No. 273.

letters, as it made morality the arbiter of actions. They dispensed with the play on words, the sensual grossness, the flights of imagination, the atrocities, and all the bad accompaniments of Shakspeare;[1] but they only half imitated him in the deep intuitions by which he pierced the human heart, and discovered therein the God and the animal. They wanted to be moved, but not overwhelmed; they allowed themselves to be impressed, but demanded to be pleased. To please rationally was the object of their literature. Such is Addison's criticism, which resembles his art; born, like his art, of classical urbanity; fit, like his art, for the life of the world, having the same solidity and the same limits, because it had the same sources, to wit, rule and gratification.

VI.

But we must consider that we are in England, and that we find there many things not agreeable to a Frenchman. In France, the classical age attained perfection; so that, compared to it, other countries lack somewhat of finish. Addison, elegant at home, is not quite so in France. Compared with Tillotson, he is the most charming man possible: compared to Montesquieu, he is only half polished. His converse is hardly sparkling enough; the quick movement, the easy change of tone, the facile smile, readily dropt and readily resumed, are hardly visible. He drags on in long and too uniform phrases; his periods are too square; we might cull a load of useless words. He tells us what he is going to say: he marks divisions and subdivisions; he quotes Latin, even Greek; he displays and protracts without end the serviceable and sticky plaster of his morality. He has no fear of being wearisome. That is not a point of fear amongst Englishmen. Men who love long demonstrative sermons of three hours are not difficult to amuse. Remember that here the women like to go to meeting, and are entertained by listening for half a day to discourses on drunkenness, or on the sliding scale for taxes: these patient creatures require nothing more than that conversation should be lively and piquant. Consequently they can put up with a less refined politeness and less disguised compliments. When Addison bows to them, which happens often, it is gravely, and his reverence is always accompanied by a warning. Take the following on the gaudy dresses:

'I looked with as much pleasure upon this little party-coloured assembly, as upon a bed of tulips, and did not know at first whether it might not be an embassy of Indian queens; but upon my going about into the pit, and taking them in front, I was immediately undeceived, and saw so much beauty in every face, that I found them all to be English. Such eyes and lips, cheeks and foreheads, could be the growth of no other country. The complexion of their faces hindered me from observing any further the colour of their hoods, though I could easily perceive, by that unspeakable satisfaction which appeared in their looks, that their own thoughts were wholly taken up on those pretty ornaments they wore upon their heads.'[2]

[1] *Spectator*, 39, 40, 58. [2] *Ibid.* No. 265.

In this discreet raillery, modified by an almost official admiration, you perceive the English mode of treating women: man, by her side, is always a lay-preacher; they are for him charming children, or useful housewives, never queens of the drawing-room, or equals, as amongst the French. When Addison wishes to bring back the Jacobite ladies to the Protestant party, he treats them almost like little girls, to whom we promise, if they will be good, to restore their doll or their cake:

'They should first reflect on the great sufferings and persecutions to which they expose themselves by the obstinacy of their behaviour. They lose their elections in every club where they are set up for toasts. They are obliged by their principles to stick a patch on the most unbecoming side of their foreheads. They forego the advantage of birthday suits. . . . They receive no benefit from the army, and are never the better for all the young fellows that wear hats and feathers. They are forced to live in the country and feed their chickens; at the same time that they might show themselves at court, and appear in brocade, if they behaved themselves well. In short, what must go to the heart of every fine woman, they throw themselves quite out of the fashion. . . . A man is startled when he sees a pretty bosom heaving with such party-rage, as is disagreeable even in that sex which is of a more coarse and rugged make. And yet such is our misfortune, that we sometimes see a pair of stays ready to burst with sedition; and hear the most masculine passions expressed in the sweetest voices. . . . Where a great number of flowers grow, the ground at distance seems entirely covered with them, and we must walk into it, before we can distinguish the several weeds that spring up in such a beautiful mass of colours.'[1]

This gallantry is too deliberate; we are somewhat shocked to see a woman touched by such thoughtful hands. It is the urbanity of a moralist; albeit he is well bred, he is not quite amiable; and if a Frenchman can receive from him lessons of pedagogy and conduct, he must come over to France to find models of manners and conversation.

If the first care of a Frenchman in society is to be amiable, that of an Englishman is to be dignified; their mood leads them to immobility, as ours to gestures; and their pleasantry is as grave as ours is gay. Laughter with them is inward; they shun giving themselves up to it; they are amused silently. Make up your mind to understand this kind of temper, it will end by pleasing you. When phlegm is united to gentleness, as in Addison, it is as agreeable as it is piquant. We are charmed to meet a lively man, who is yet master of himself. We are astonished to see these contrary qualities together. Each heightens and modifies the other. We are not repelled by venomous bitterness, as in Swift, or by continuous buffoonery, as in Voltaire. We rejoice altogether in the rare union, which for the first time combines serious bearing and good humour. Read this little satire against the bad taste of the stage and the public:

'There is nothing that of late years has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signor Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which

[1] *Freeholder*, No. 26.

has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain. . . . The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy, choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done. . . . The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the playhouse, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; insomuch that, after a short modest walk upon the stage, he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of shewing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-coloured doublet; but this was only to make work for himself, in his private character of a tailor. . . . The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says, very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain, that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner than in gaming and drinking. . . . This gentleman's temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man. . . . In the meantime, I have related this combat of the lion, to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain.'[1]

There is much originality in this grave gaiety. As a rule, singularity is in accordance with the taste of the nation; they like to be struck strongly by contrasts. Our literature seems to them threadbare; we again find them not delicate. A number of the *Spectator* which seemed pleasant to London ladies would have shocked people in Paris. Thus, Addison relates in the form of a dream the dissection of a beau's brain:

'The pineal gland, which many of our modern philosophers suppose to be the seat of the soul, smelt very strong of essence and orange-flower water, and was encompassed with a kind of horny substance, cut into a thousand little faces or mirrors, which were imperceptible to the naked eye; insomuch that the soul, if there had been any here, must have been always taken up in contemplating her own beauties. We observed a large antrum or cavity in the sinciput, that was filled with ribbons, lace, and embroidery. . . . We did not find anything very remarkable in the eye, saving only, that the *musculi amatorii*, or, as we may translate it into English, the ogling muscles, were very much worn, and decayed with use; whereas, on the contrary, the elevator, or the muscle which turns the eye towards heaven, did not appear to have been used at all.'[2]

These anatomical details, which would disgust us, amused a positive mind; crudity is for him only exactness; accustomed to precise images, he finds no objectionable odour in the medical style. Addison does not share our repugnance. To rail at a vice, he becomes a mathematician, an economist, a pedant, an apothecary. Special terms amuse him. He sets up a court to judge crinolines, and condemns petticoats in technical formulas. He teaches how to handle a fan as if he were teaching to prime and load muskets. He draws up a list of men dead or in-

[1] *Spectator*, No. 13.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 275.

jured by love, and the ridiculous causes which have reduced them to such a condition:

'Will Simple, smitten at the Opera by the glance of an eye that was aimed at one who stood by him.

'Sir Christopher Crazy, Bart., hurt by the brush of a whalebone petticoat.

'Ned Courtly, presenting Flavia with her glove (which she had dropped on purpose), she received it and took away his life with a curtsey.

'John Gosselin, having received a slight hurt from a pair of blue eyes, as he was making his escape, was dispatched by a smile.'[1]

Other statistics, with recapitulations and tables of numbers, relate the history of the Leucadian leap:

'Aridæus, a beautiful youth of Epirus, in love with Praxinoe, the wife of Thespis, escaped without damage, saving only that two of his foreteeth were struck out, and his nose a little flatted.

'Hipparchus, being passionately fond of his own wife, who was enamoured of Bathyllus, leaped and died of his fall; upon which his wife married her gallant.'[2]

You see this strange mode of painting human folly: in England it is called humour. It contains an incisive good sense, the habit of restraint, business habits, but above all a fundamental energy of invention. The race is less refined, but stronger; and the pleasures which content its mind and taste are like the liquors which suit its palate and its stomach.

This potent Germanic spirit breaks even in Addison through his classical and Latin exterior. Albeit he relishes art, he still loves nature. His education, which has loaded him with maxims, has not destroyed his virgin sentiment of truth. In his travels in France he preferred the wildness of Fontainebleau to the correctness of Versailles. He shakes off worldly refinements to praise the simplicity of the old national ballads. He explains to his public the sublime images, the vast passions, the deep religion of *Paradise Lost*. It is curious to see him, compass in hand, kept back by Bossu, fettered in endless arguments and academical phrases, attaining with one spring, by strength of natural emotion, the high unexplored regions to which Milton rose by the inspiration of faith and genius. He would not say, with Voltaire, that the allegory of Sin and Death is enough to make people sick. He has a foundation of grand imagination, which makes him indifferent to the little refinements of social civilisation. He sojourns willingly amid the grandeur and marvels of the other world. He is penetrated by the presence of the Invisible, he must escape from the interests and hopes of the petty life in which we crawl.[3] This source of faith gushes from him everywhere; in vain is it enclosed in the regular channel of official dogma; the tests and arguments with which it is covered do not hide its true origin. It springs from the grave and fertile imagination which can only be satisfied with a sight of what is beyond.

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[1] *Spectator*, No. 377. [2] *Ibid.* No. 233.

[3] See the last thirty numbers of the *Spectator*.

Such a faculty swallows a man up; and if we descend to the examination of literary qualities, we find it at the bottom as well as at the top. Nothing in Addison is more varied and rich than the changes and the scenery. The driest morality is transformed under his hand into pictures and stories. There are letters from all kinds of men, clergymen, common people, men of fashion, who keep their own style, and disguise their advice under the form of a little novel. An ambassador from Bantam jests, like Montesquieu, at the lies of European politeness. Greek or Oriental tales, imaginary travels, the vision of a Scotch seer, the memoirs of a rebel, the history of ants, the transformations of an ape, the journal of an idle man, a walk in Westminster, the genealogy of humour, the laws of ridiculous clubs; in short, an inexhaustible mass of pleasant or solid fictions. The allegories are most frequent. We feel that the author is pleased in this magnificent and fantastic world; he is giving himself a sort of opera; his eyes must look on colours. Here is a paper on religions, very Protestant, but as sparkling as it is ingenious: pleasure here did not consist, as in France, in the vivacity and variety of tone, but in the splendour and justice of invention:

'The middle figure, which immediately attracted the eyes of the whole company, and was much bigger than the rest, was formed like a matron, dressed in the habit of an elderly woman of quality in Queen Elizabeth's days. The most remarkable parts of her dress were the beaver with the steeple crown, the scarf that was darker than sable, and the lawn apron that was whiter than ermine. Her gown was of the richest black velvet, and just upon her heart studded with large diamonds of an inestimable value, disposed in the form of a cross. She bore an inexpressible cheerfulness and dignity in her aspect; and though she seemed in years, appeared with so much spirit and vivacity, as gave her at the same time an air of old age and immortality. I found my heart touched with so much love and reverence at the sight of her, that the tears ran down my face as I looked upon her; and still the more I looked upon her, the more my heart was melted with the sentiments of filial tenderness and duty. I discovered every moment something so charming in this figure, that I could scarce take my eyes off it. On its right hand there sat the figure of a woman so covered with ornaments, that her face, her body, and her hands were almost entirely hid under them. The little you could see of her face was painted, and what I thought very odd, had something in it like artificial wrinkles; but I was the less surprised at it, when I saw upon her forehead an old-fashioned tower of grey hairs. Her headdress rose very high by three several stories or degrees; her garments had a thousand colours in them, and were embroidered with crosses in gold, silver, and silk; she had nothing on, so much as a glove or a slipper, which was not marked with this figure; nay, so superstitiously fond did she appear of it, that she sat cross-legged. . . . The next to her was a figure which somewhat puzzled me; it was that of a man looking, with horror in his eyes, upon a silver bason filled with water. Observing something in his countenance that looked like lunacy, I fancied at first that he was to express that kind of distraction which the physicians call the Hydrophobia; but considering what the intention of the show was, I immediately recollected myself, and concluded it to be Anabaptism.'[1]

[1] *Tatler*, No. 257.

The reader must guess what these two first figures meant. They will please an Anglican more than a Catholic; but I think that a Catholic himself cannot help recognising the fulness and freshness of the fiction.

Genuine imagination naturally ends in the invention of characters. For, if you clearly represent to yourself a situation or an action, you will see at the same time the whole network of its connection; the passion and faculties, all the gestures and tones of voice, all details of dress, dwelling, society, which flow from it, will bring their precedents and their consequences; and this multitude of ideas, slowly organised, will at last be concentrated in a single sentiment, from which, as from a deep spring, will break forth the portrait and the history of a complete character. There are several such in Addison; the quiet observer Will Honeycomb, the country Tory Sir Roger de Coverley, which are not satirical theses, like those of La Bruyère, but genuine individuals, like, and sometimes equal to, the characters of the great contemporary novels. In fact, he invents the novel, without suspecting it, at the same time and in the same way as his most illustrious neighbours. His characters are taken from life, from the manners and conditions of the time, described at length and minutely in all the parts of their education and surroundings, with the precision and positive observation, marvellously real and English. A masterpiece as well as an historical record is Sir Roger de Coverley, the country gentleman, loyal servant of constitution and church, justice of the peace, patron of the church, whose estate shows on a small scale the structure of the English nation. This domain is a little state, paternally governed, but still governed. Sir Roger rates his tenants, passes them in review in church, knows their affairs, gives them advice, assistance, commands; he is respected, obeyed, loved, because he lives with them, because the simplicity of his tastes and education puts him almost on a level with them; because in his position as magistrate, old landholder, rich man, benefactor, and neighbour, he exercises a moral and legal, a useful and respected authority. Addison at the same time shows in him the solid and peculiar English character, built of heart of oak, with all the knots of the primitive bark, which can neither be softened nor planed down, a great fund of kindness which extends to animals, love of country and bodily exercises, a disposition to command and discipline, the feeling of subordination and respect, much common sense and little finesse, the habit of displaying and establishing in public his singularities and oddities, careless of ridicule, without thought of bravado, solely because these men acknowledge no judge but themselves. A hundred traits depict the times; a lack of reading, a remnant of belief in witchcraft, peasant and hunting manners, the ignorances of an artless or backward mind. Sir Roger gives the children, who answer their catechism well, a Bible for themselves, and a quarter of bacon for their mothers. When a verse pleases him, he sings it for half a minute after the congregation has finished. He kills eight fat pigs at Christmas, and sends a pudding

and a pack of cards to each poor family in the parish. When he goes to the theatre, he supplies his servants with cudgels to protect themselves from the thieves which, he says, infest London. Addison returns a score of times to the old knight, always discovering some new aspect of his character, a disinterested observer of humanity, curiously assiduous and discerning, a true creator, having but a step to go to enter, like Richardson and Fielding, upon the great work of modern literature, the novel of manners and customs.

Beyond this, all is poetry. It has flowed through his prose a thousand times more sincere and beautiful than in his verses. Rich oriental fancies are displayed, not with a shower of sparks as in Voltaire, but under a calm and abundant light, which makes the regular folds of their purple and gold undulate. The music of the long cadenced and tranquil phrases leads the mind sweetly amidst romantic splendours and enchantments, and the deep sentiment of ever young nature recalls the happy quietude of Spenser.[1] Through gentle railleries or moral essays we feel that his imagination is happy, delighted in the contemplation of the sway of the forests which clothe the mountains, the eternal verdure of the valleys, invigorated by fresh springs, and the wide horizons undulating to the border of the distant sky. Great and simple sentiments come naturally to unite these noble images, and their measured harmony creates a unique spectacle, worthy to fascinate the heart of an honest man by its gravity and sweetness. Such are the Visions of Mirza, which I will give almost entire:

'On the fifth day of the moon, which according to the custom of my forefathers I always keep holy, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hills of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer. As I was here airing myself on the tops of the mountains, I fell into a profound contemplation on the vanity of human life; and passing from one thought to another: Surely, said I, man is but a shadow and life a dream. Whilst I was thus musing, I cast my eyes towards the summit of a rock that was not far from me, where I discovered one in the habit of a shepherd, with a little musical instrument in his hand. As I looked upon him he applied it to his lips, and began to play upon it. The sound of it was exceeding sweet, and wrought into a variety of tunes that were inexpressibly melodious, and altogether different from any thing I had ever heard. They put me in mind of those heavenly airs that are played to the departed souls of good men upon their first arrival in Paradise, to wear out the impressions of the last agonies, and qualify them for the pleasures of that happy place. My heart melted away in secret raptures. . . .

'He (the genius) then led me to the highest pinnacle of the rock, and placing me on the top of it, Cast thy eyes eastward, said he, and tell me what thou seest. I see, said I, a huge valley, and a prodigious tide of water rolling through it. The valley that thou seest, said he, is the Vale of Misery, and the tide of water that thou seest is part of the great tide of eternity. What is the reason, said I, that the tide I see rises out of a thick mist at one end, and again loses itself in a thick mist at the other? What thou seest, said he, is that portion of eternity which is called

[1] *Story of Abdallah and of Illpa.*

time, measured out by the sun, and reaching from the beginning of the world to its consummation. Examine now, said he, this sea that is bounded with darkness at both ends, and tell me what thou discoverest in it. I see a bridge, said I, standing in the midst of the tide. The bridge thou seest, said he, is human life; consider it attentively. Upon a more leisurely survey of it, I found that it consisted of three score and ten entire arches, with several broken arches, which added to those that were entire, made up the number about an hundred. As I was counting the arches, the genius told me that this bridge consisted at first of a thousand arches: but that a great flood swept away the rest, and left the bridge in the ruinous condition I now beheld it. But tell me further, said he, what thou discoverest on it. I see multitudes of people passing over it, said I, and a black cloud hanging on each end of it. As I looked more attentively, I saw several of the passengers dropping through the bridge into the great tide that flowed underneath it; and upon further examination, perceived there were innumerable trap-doors that lay concealed in the bridge, which the passengers no sooner trod upon, but they fell through them into the tide, and immediately disappeared. These hidden pit-falls were set very thick at the entrance of the bridge, so that throngs of people no sooner broke through the cloud, but many of them fell into them. They grew thinner towards the middle, but multiplied and lay closer together towards the end of the arches that were entire.

'There were indeed some persons, but their number was very small, that continued a kind of hobbling march on the broken arches, but fell through one after another, being quite tired and spent with so long a walk.

'I passed some time in the contemplation of this wonderful structure, and the great variety of objects which it presented. My heart was filled with a deep melancholy to see several dropping unexpectedly in the midst of mirth and jollity, and catching at everything that stood by them to save themselves. Some were looking up towards heaven in a thoughtful posture, and in the midst of a speculation stumbled and fell out of sight. Multitudes were very busy in the pursuit of bubbles that glittered in their eyes and danced before them; but often when they thought themselves within the reach of them, their footing failed, and down they sunk. In this confusion of objects, I observed some with scimitars in their hands, and others with urinals, who ran to and fro upon the bridge, thrusting several persons on trap-doors which did not seem to lie in their way, and which they might have escaped had they not been thus forced upon them. . . .

'I here fetched a deep sigh. Alas, said I, man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality! tortured in life, and swallowed up in death!—The genius, being moved with compassion towards me, bid me quit so uncomfortable a prospect. Look no more, said he, on man in the first stage of his existence, in his setting out for eternity; but cast thine eye on that thick mist into which the tide bears the several generations of mortals that fall into it. I directed my sight as I was ordered, and (whether or no the good genius strengthened it with any supernatural force, or dissipated part of the mist that was before too thick for the eye to penetrate) I saw the valley opening at the farther end, and spreading forth into an immense ocean, that had a huge rock of adamant running through the midst of it, and dividing it into two equal parts. The clouds still rested on one half of it, insomuch that I could discover nothing in it: but the other appeared to me a vast ocean planted with innumerable islands, that were covered with fruits and flowers, and interwoven with a thousand little shining seas that ran among them. I could see persons dressed in glorious habits, with garlands upon their heads, passing among the trees, lying down by the sides of

the fountains, or resting on beds of flowers; and could hear a confused harmony of singing birds, falling waters, human voices, and musical instruments. Gladness grew in me upon the discovery of so delightful a scene. I wished for the wings of an eagle, that I might fly away to those happy seats; but the genius told me there was no passage to them, except through the gates of death that I saw opening every moment upon the bridge. The islands, said he, that lie so fresh and green before thee, and with which the whole face of the ocean appears spotted as far as thou canst see, are more in number than the sands on the sea-shore; there are myriads of islands behind those which thou here discoverest, reaching farther than thine eye, or even thine imagination, can extend itself. These are the mansions of good men after death, who according to the degree and kinds of virtue in which they excelled, are distributed among these several islands, which abound with pleasures of different kinds and degrees, suitable to the relishes and perfections of those who are settled in them: every island is a paradise accommodated to its respective inhabitants. Are not these, O Mirza, habitations worth contending for? Does life appear miserable, that gives thee opportunities of earning such a reward? Is death to be feared, that will convey thee to so happy an existence? Think not man was made in vain, who has such an eternity reserved for him.—I gazed with inexpressible pleasure on these happy islands. At length, said I, shew me now, I beseech thee, the secrets that lie hid under those dark clouds which cover the ocean on the other side of the rock of adamant. The genius making me no answer, I turned me about to address myself to him a second time, but I found that he had left me; I then turned again to the vision which I had been so long contemplating; but instead of the rolling tide, the arched bridge, and the happy islands, I saw nothing but the long hollow valley of Bagdat, with oxen, sheep, and camels grazing upon the sides of it.'[1]

In this ornate moral sketch, this fine piece of argument, so correct and so eloquent, this ingenious and noble imagination, I find an epitome of all Addison's characteristics. These are the English tints which distinguish this classical age from that of the French: a narrower and more practical argument, a more poetical and less eloquent urbanity, a structure of mind more inventive and more rich, less sociable and less refined.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 159.

CHAPTER V.

Swift.

I. Swift's origin—Character—Pride—Sensitiveness—His life in Sir William Temple's house—At Lord Berkeley's—Political life—Influence—Failure—Private life—Lovemaking—Despair and insanity.

II. His wit—His power, and its limits—Prosaic and positive mind—Holding a mean position between vulgarity and genius—Why destructive.

III. The pamphleteer—How literature now concerns itself with politics—Difference of parties and pamphlets in France and England—Conditions of the literary pamphlet—Of the effective pamphlet—These pamphlets are special and practical—The *Examiner*—*The Drapier's Letters*—*A Short Character of Thomas Earl of Wharton*—*An Argument against Abolishing Christianity*—Political invective—Personal defamation—Incisive common sense—Grave irony.

IV. The poet—Comparison of Swift and Voltaire—Gravity and harshness of his jests—*Bickerstaff*—Coarseness of his gallantry—*Cadenus and Vanessa*—His prosaic and realistic poetry—*The Grand Question Debated*—Energy and sadness of his shorter poems—*Verses on his own Death*—His excesses.

V. The narrator and philosopher—*A Tale of a Tub*—His opinion on religion, science, philosophy, and reason—How he maligns human intelligence—*Gulliver's Travels*—His opinion on society, government, rank, and professions—How he maligns human nature—Last pamphlets—Composition of his character and genius.

IN 1685, in the great hall of Dublin University, the professors engaged in examining for the bachelor's degree enjoyed a singular spectacle: a poor scholar, odd, awkward, with hard blue eyes, an orphan, friendless, poorly supported by the charity of an uncle, having failed once before to take his degree on account of his ignorance of logic, had come up again without having condescended to read logic. To no purpose his tutor set before him the most respectable folios—Smiglecius, Kechermannus, Burgerdiscius. He turned over a few pages, and shut them directly. When the argumentation came on, the proctor was obliged to 'reduce his replies into syllogism.' He was asked how he could reason well without rules; he replied that he did reason pretty well without them. This folly shocked them; yet he was received, though barely, *speciali gratiâ*, says the register, and the professors went away, doubtless with pitying smiles, lamenting the feeble brain of Jonathan Swift.

I.

This was his first humiliation and his first rebellion. His whole life was like this moment, overwhelmed and made wretched by sorrows and hatred. To what excess they rose, his portrait and his history alone can show. He had an exaggerated and terrible pride, and made the haughtiness of the most powerful ministers and most mighty lords bend beneath his arrogance. A simple journalist, possessing nothing but a small Irish living, he treated with them on an equality. Harley, the prime minister, having sent him a bank bill for his first articles, he was offended at being taken for a paid man, returned the money, demanded an apology; he received it, and wrote in his journal: 'I have taken Mr. Harley into favour again.'[1] On another occasion, having observed that St. John, Secretary of State, looked upon him coldly, he rebuked him for it:

'One thing I warned him of, never to appear cold to me, for I would not be treated like a school-boy; that I expected every great minister who honoured me with his acquaintance, if he heard or saw anything to my disadvantage, would let me know in plain words, and not put me in pain to guess by the change or coldness of his countenance or behaviour; for it was what I would hardly bear from a crowned head; and I thought no subject's favour was worth it: and that I designed to let my Lord Keeper and M. Harley know the same thing, that they might use me accordingly.'[2]

St. John approved of this, made excuses, said that he had passed several nights at 'business, and one night at drinking,' and that his fatigue might have seemed like ill-humour. In the minister's drawing-room Swift went up and spoke to some obscure person, and compelled the lords to come and speak to him:

'Mr. secretary told me the Duke of Buckingham had been talking to him much about me, and desired my acquaintance. I answered, it could not be, for he had not made sufficient advances. Then the Duke of Shrewsbury said, he thought the Duke was not used to make advances. I said, I could not help that; for I always expected advances in proportion to men's quality, and more from a duke than other men.'[3]

'Saw Lord Halifax at court, and we joined and talked, and the Duchess of Shrewsbury came up and reproached me for not dining with her: I said that was not so soon done; for I expected more advances from ladies, especially duchesses: She promised to comply. . . . Lady Oglethorp brought me and the Duchess of Hamilton together to-day in the drawing-room, and I have given her some encouragement, but not much.'[4]

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[1] In Swift's Works, ed. W. Scott, 19 vols. 1814; *Journal to Stella*, ii. Feb. 13 (1710–11). He says also (Feb. 7): 'I will not see him (M. Harley) till he makes amends. . . . I was deaf to all entreaties, and have desired Lewis to go to him, and let him know that I expected farther satisfaction. If we let these great ministers pretend too much, there will be no governing them.'

[2] *Ibid.* April 3, 1711. [3] *Ibid.* May 19, 1711. [4] *Ibid.* Oct. 7, 1711.

He triumphed in his arrogance, and said with a restrained joy, full of vengeance:

'I generally am acquainted with about thirty in the drawing-room, and am so proud that I make all the lords come up to me. One passes half an hour pleasant enough.'

He carried his triumph to brutality and tyranny; writing to the Duchess of Queensberry, he says:

'I am glad you know your duty; for it has been a known and established rule above twenty years in England, that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspired to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality, the greater were their advances.'[1]

The famous General Webb, with his crutch and cane, limped up two flights of stairs to congratulate and invite him; Swift accepted, then an hour later withdrew his consent, preferring to dine elsewhere. He seemed to look upon himself as a superior being, exempt from the necessity of ceremony, entitled to homage, caring neither for sex, rank, nor fame, whose business it was to protect and destroy, distributing favours, insults, and pardons. Addison, then Lady Gifford, a friend of twenty years, having offended him, he refused to take them back into his favour until they had asked his pardon. Lord Lansdown, Secretary for War, being annoyed by an expression in the *Examiner*, Swift says:

'This I resented highly that he should complain of me before he spoke to me. I sent him a peppering letter, and would not summon him by a note, as I did the rest; nor ever will have anything to say to him, till he begs my pardon.'[2]

He treated art like man, writing a thing off, scorning the wretched necessity of reading it over, putting his name to nothing, letting every piece make its way on its own merits, unassisted, without the prestige of his name, recommended by none. He had the soul of a dictator, marred by power, and saying openly: 'All my endeavours from a boy to distinguish myself were only for want of a great title and fortune, that I might be treated like a lord. . . . Whether right or wrong, it is no great matter; and so the reputation of great learning does the work of a blue ribbon, or of a coach and six horses.'[3] But he thought this power and rank due to him; he did not ask, but expected them. 'I will never beg for myself, though I often do it for others.' He desired dominion, and acted as if he had it. Hatred and misfortune find their native soil in these despotic minds. They live like fallen kings, always insulting and hurt, having all the miseries but none of the consolations of pride, unable to relish either society or solitude, too ambitious to be content with silence, too haughty to use the world, born for rebellion and defeat, destined by their passions and impotence to despair and to talent.

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[1] Swift's Works, xvii. p. 352.

[2] *Journal to Stella*, iii., March 27, 1711-12.

[3] Letter to Pope.

Sensitiveness in this case aggravated the stings of pride. Under this outward calmness raged furious passions. There was within him a ceaseless tempest of wrath and desire:

'A person of great honour in Ireland (who was pleased to stoop so low as to look into my mind) used to tell me that my mind was like a conjured spirit, that would do mischief, if I would not give it employment.'

Resentment was deeper and hotter with him than with other men. Listen to the deep sigh of joyful hatred with which he sees his enemies under his feet:

'The whigs were ravished to see me, and would lay hold on me as a twig while they are drowning; and the great men making me their clumsy apologies.'[1] 'It is good to see what a lamentable confession the whigs all make of my ill usage.'[2]

And soon after: 'Rot them, for ungrateful dogs; I will make them repent their usage before I leave this place.'[3] He is satiated and contented; like a wolf or a lion, he cares for nothing else.

This fury led him to every sort of madness and violence. His *Drapier's Letters* had roused Ireland against the government, and the government had set up a proclamation offering a reward to any one who would denounce the Draper. Swift came suddenly into the reception-chamber, elbowed the groups, went up to the lord-lieutenant, with indignation on his countenance and thundering voice, and said:

'So, my lord, this is a glorious exploit that you performed yesterday, in suffering a proclamation against a poor shopkeeper, whose only crime is an honest endeavour to save his country from ruin.'[4]

And he broke out into railing amidst general silence and amazement. The lord-lieutenant, a man of sense, answered calmly. Before such a torrent men turned aside. This chaotic and self-devouring heart could not understand the calmness of his friends; he asked them: 'Do not the corruptions and villanies of men eat your flesh, and exhaust your spirits?'[5]

Resignation was repulsive to him. His actions, sudden and strange, broke in upon his silent moods like flashes of lightning. He was eccentric and violent in everything, in his pleasantry, in his private affairs, with his friends, with unknown people; he was often taken for a madman. Addison and his friends had seen for several days at the St. James' Coffee-house a singular parson, who put his hat on the table, walked for half an hour backward and forward, paid his money, and left, having attended to nothing and said nothing. They called him the mad parson. One day this parson perceives a gentleman 'just

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[1] *Journal to Stella*, ii., Sept. 9, 1710.
[2] *Ibid.* Sept. 30, 1710.
[3] *Ibid.* Nov. 8, 1710.
[4] *Swift's Life*, by Roscoe, i. 56.
[5] *Swift's Life*, by W. Scott, i. 279.

come out of the country, went straight up to him, and in a very abrupt manner, without any previous salute, asked him, "Pray sir, do you know any good weather in the world?" After staring a little at the singularity of Swift's manner and the oddity of the question, the gentleman answered, "Yes, sir, I thank God, I remember a great deal of good weather in my time." "That is more," said Swift, "than I can say. I never remember any weather that was not too hot or too cold, too wet or too dry; but, however God Almighty contrives it, at the end of the year 'tis all very well."'[1] Another day, dining with the Earl of Burlington, the Dean said to the mistress of the house, 'Lady Burlington, I hear you can sing; sing me a song.' The lady looked on this unceremonious manner of asking a favour with distaste, and positively refused. He said, 'she should sing, or he would make her. Why, madam, I suppose you take me for one of your poor English hedge-parsons; sing when I bid you!' As the earl did nothing but laugh at this freedom, the lady was so vexed, that she burst into tears, and retired. His first compliment to her, when he saw her again, was, 'Pray, madam, are you as proud and as ill-natured now, as when I saw you last?'[2] People were astonished or amused at these outbursts; I see in them sobs and cries, the explosion of long overwhelming and bitter thoughts; they are the starts of a mind unsubdued, shuddering, rebelling, breaking the barriers, wounding, crushing, or bruising every one on its road, or those who wish to stop it. Swift became mad at last; he felt this madness coming, he has described it in a horrible manner; beforehand he has tasted all the disgust and bitterness of it; he showed it on his tragic face, in his terrible and wan eyes. This is the powerful and mournful genius which nature gave up as a prey to society and life; society and life poured all their poisons in him.

He knew what poverty and scorn were even at the age when the mind expands, when the heart is full of pride,[3] when he was hardly maintained by the alms of his family, gloomy and without hope, feeling his strength and the dangers of his strength.[4] At twenty-one, as secretary to Sir W. Temple, he had twenty pounds a year salary, sat at the

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[1] Sheridan's *Life of Swift.* [2] W. Scott's *Life of Swift*, i. 477.

[3] At that time he had already begun the *Tale of a Tub.*

[4] He addresses his muse thus, in *Verses occasioned by Sir William Temple's late illness and recovery*, xiv. 45:

'Wert thou right woman, thou should'st scorn to look
On an abandoned wretch by hopes forsook;
Forsook by hopes, ill fortune's last relief,
Assign'd for life to unremitting grief;
To thee I owe that fatal bend of mind
Still to unhappy restless thoughts inclined;
To thee, what oft I vainly strive to hide,
That scorn of fools, by fools mistook for pride.'

same table with the upper servants,[1] wrote Pindaric odes in honour of his master, spent ten years amidst the humiliations of servitude and the familiarity of the servants' hall, obliged to adulate a gouty and flattered courtier, to submit to my lady his sister, acutely pained, 'when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour,'[2] lured by false hopes, forced after an attempt at independence to resume the livery which was choking him. 'When you find years coming on, without hopes of a place at court, . . . I directly advise you to go upon the road, which is the only post of honour left you; there you will meet many of your old comrades, and live a short life and a merry one.'[3] This is followed by instructions as to the conduct servants ought to display when led to the gallows. Such is his *Directions to Servants;* he was relating what he had suffered. At the age of thirty-one, expecting a place from William III., he edited the works of his patron, dedicated them to the sovereign, sent him a memorial, got nothing, and fell back upon the post of chaplain and private secretary to the Earl of Berkeley. He soon remained only chaplain to that nobleman, feeling all the disgust which the part of ecclesiastical valet must inspire in a man of feeling.

> 'You know I honour the cloth; I design to be a parson's wife. . . .
> And over and above, that I may have your excellency's letter
> With an order for the chaplain aforesaid, or instead of him a better.'[4]

Their excellencies, having promised him the deanery of Derry, gave it to another. Driven to politics, he wrote a Whig pamphlet, *A Discourse on the Contests and Dissensions in Athens and Rome*, received from Lord Halifax and the party leaders a score of fine promises, and was neglected. Twenty years of insults without revenge, and humiliations without respite; the inner tempest of nourished and crushed hopes, vivid and brilliant dreams, suddenly faded by the necessity of a mechanical duty; the habit of hatred and suffering, the necessity of concealing these, the baneful consciousness of superiority, the isolation of genius and pride, the bitterness of accumulated rage and pent-up scorn,—these were the goads which pricked him like a bull. More than a thousand pamphlets in four years, stung him still more, with such designations as renegade, traitor, and atheist. He crushed them all, set his foot on the Whig party, solaced himself with the poignant pleasure of victory. If ever a soul was saturated with the joy of tearing,

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[1] These assertions have been denied. See Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 14.—Tr.

[2] 'Don't you remember how I used to be in pain when Sir William Temple would look cold and out of humour for three or four days, and I used to suspect a hundred reasons? I have plucked up my spirit since then, faith; he spoiled a fine gentleman.'—*Journal to Stella*, April 4, 1710–11.

[3] *Directions to Servants*, xii. ch. iii. 434.

[4] *Mrs. Harris' Petition*, xiv. 52.

outraging, and destroying, it was his. Excess of scorn, implacable irony, crushing logic, the cruel smile of the foeman, who sees beforehand the mortal spot in which he will strike his enemy, advances towards him, tortures him deliberately, eagerly, with enjoyment,—such were the feelings which had leavened him, and which broke from him with such harshness that he hindered his own career;[1] and that of so many high places for which he stretched out his hands, there remained for him only a deanery in poor Ireland. The accession of George I. exiled him thither; the accession of George II., on which he had counted, confined him there. He contended there first against popular hatred, then against the victorious minister, then against entire humanity, in sanguinary pamphlets, despairing satires;[2] he tasted there once more the pleasure of fighting and wounding; he suffered there to the end, soured by the advance of years, by the spectacle of oppression and misery, by the feeling of his own impotence, enraged to have to live amongst 'an enslaved people,' chained and vanquished. He says:

'I find myself disposed every year, or rather every month, to be more angry and revengeful; and my rage is so ignoble, that it descends even to resent the folly and baseness of the enslaved people among whom I live.'[3]

This cry is the epitome of his public life; these feelings are the materials which public life furnished to his talent.

He experienced these feelings also in private life, more violent and familiar. He had brought up and purely loved a charming, well-informed, modest young girl, Esther Johnson, who from infancy had loved and reverenced him alone. She lived with him, he had made her his confidante. From London, during his political struggles, he sent her the full journal of his slightest actions; he wrote to her twice a day, with extreme ease and familiarity, with all the playfulness, vivacity, petting and caressing names of tenderest attachment. Yet another girl, beautiful and rich, Miss Vanhomrigh, attached herself to him, declared her passion, received from him several marks of his own, followed him to Ireland, now jealous, now submissive, but so impassioned, so unhappy, that her letters might have broken a harder heart:

'If you continue to treat me as you do, you will not be made uneasy by me long. . . . I am sure I could have borne the rack much better, than those killing, killing words of you. . . . Oh that you may have but so much regard for me left, that this complaint may touch your soul with pity!'[4]

She pined and died. Esther Johnson, who had so long possessed

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[1] By the *Tale of a Tub* with the clergy, and by the *Prophesy of Windsor* with the queen.

[2] *Drapier's Letters, Gulliver's Travels, Rhapsody on Poetry, A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children*, etc., and several pamphlets on Ireland.

[3] Letter to Lord Bolingbroke, Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 274.

[4] Letter of Miss Vanhomrigh, Dublin, 1714, xix. 421.

Swift's whole heart, suffered still more. All was changed in Swift's house. 'At my first coming (home) I thought I should have died with discontent, and was horribly melancholy while they were installing me.'[1] He found tears, distrust, resentment, cold silence, in place of familiarity and tenderness. He married Miss Johnson from duty, but in secret, and on condition that she should only be his wife in name. She was twelve years dying; Swift went away to England as often as he could. His house was a hell to him; it is thought that some secret cause had influenced his loves and his marriage. Delany, his biographer, having once found him talking with Archbishop King, saw the archbishop in tears, and Swift rushing by, with a countenance full of grief, and a distracted air. 'Sir,' said the prelate, 'you have just met the most unhappy man upon earth; but on the subject of his wretchedness you must never ask a question.' Esther Johnson died. Swift's anguish, the spectres by which he was haunted, the horrors in which the remembrance of the two women, slowly ruined and killed by his fault, plunged and bound him, nothing but his end can tell. 'It is time for me to have done with the world . . . and so I would . . . and not die here in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole.'[2] Overwork and excess of emotions had made him ill from his youth: he was subject to giddiness; he lost his hearing. He had long felt that reason was deserting him. One day he was observed 'gazing intently at the top of a lofty elm, the head of which had been blasted. Upon his friend's approach, he pointed to it, significantly adding, "I shall be like that tree, and die first at the top."'[3] His memory left him; he received the attentions of others with disgust, sometimes with rage. He lived alone, gloomy, unable to read. They say he passed a year without uttering a word, with a horror of the human face, walking ten hours a day, a maniac, then an idiot. A tumour came on one of his eyes, so that he continued a month without sleeping, and five men were needed to prevent his tearing out the eye with his nails. One of his last words was, 'I am mad.' When his will was opened, it was found that he left his whole fortune to build a madhouse.

II.

These passions and these miseries were necessary to inspire *Gulliver's Travels* and the *Tale of a Tub*.

A strange and powerful form of mind, too, was necessary, as English as his pride and his passions. Swift has the style of a surgeon and a judge, cold, grave, solid, unadorned, without vivacity or passion, manly and practical. He desired neither to please, nor to divert, nor

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[1] *Journal to Stella*, 8th July 1712. Miss Vanhomrigh died, however, in 1721.

[2] Letter to Bolingbroke, Dublin, March 21, 1728, xvii. 276.

[3] Roscoe's *Life of Swift*, i. 80.

to carry people away, nor to touch; he never hesitated, nor was redundant, nor was excited, nor made an effort. He expressed his thoughts in a uniform tone, with exact, precise, often harsh terms, with familiar comparisons, levelling all within reach of his hand, even the loftiest things—especially the loftiest—with a brutal and always haughty coolness. He knows life as a banker knows accounts; and his total once made up, he scorns or knocks down the babblers who dispute it in his presence.

With the sum total he knows the items. He not only familiarly and vigorously seized on every object, but he also decomposed it, and kept an inventory of its details. His imagination was as minute as it was energetic. He could give you an indictment of dry facts on every event and object, so connected and natural as to deceive one. *Gulliver's Travels* read like a log-book. Isaac Bickerstaff's predictions were taken literally by the inquisition in Portugal. His account of M. du Baudrier seems an authentic translation. He gives to an extravagant romance the air of a genuine history. By this detailed and solid science he imports into literature the positive spirit of men of business and experience. Nothing could be more vigorous, narrow, unhappy, for nothing could be more destructive. No greatness, false or true, can stand before him; whatsoever he fathoms and takes in hand loses at once its prestige and value. Whilst he decomposes he displays the real ugliness, and removes the fictitious beauty of objects. Whilst he brings them to the level of common things, he suppresses their real beauty, and gives them a fictitious ugliness. He presents all their gross features, and nothing but their gross features. Look with him into the physical details of science, religion, state, and with him reduce science, religion, state, to the low standing of every-day events; with him you will see here a Bedlam of shrivelled up dreamers, narrow and chimerical brains, busy in contradicting, heaping up hollow phrases in mouldy books, inventing conjectures, and crying them up for the truth; there, a band of enthusiasts, mumbling phrases which they do not understand, adoring figures of rhetoric as mysteries, attaching holiness or impiety to lawn-sleeves or postures, spending in persecutions or genuflexions the surplus of sheepish or ferocious folly with which an evil fate has crammed their brains; there, again, flocks of idiots pouring out their blood and treasure for the whims or plots of a carriage-drawn aristocrat, out of respect for the carriage which they themselves have given him. What part of human nature or existence can continue great and beautiful, before a mind which, penetrating all details, perceives men eating, sleeping, dressing, in all dull and mean actions, degrading everything to the level of vulgar events, trivial circumstances of dress and cookery? It is not enough for the positive mind to see the springs, pulleys, lamps, and whatever there is objectionable in the opera at which he is present; he makes it more objectionable by calling it a show. It is not enough not to ignore anything; we must also

refuse to admire. He treats things like domestic utensils; after reckoning up their materials, he gives them a vile name. Nature for him is but a caldron, and he knows the proportion and number of the ingredients cooking in it. In this power and this weakness you see beforehand the misanthropy and the talent of Swift.

There are, indeed, but two modes of agreeing with the world: mediocrity of mind and superiority of intelligence—the one for the public and the fools, the other for artists and philosophers: the one consists in seeing nothing, the other in seeing all. You will respect the respectable, if you only see the surface—if you take them as they are, if you let yourself be duped by the fine show which they never fail to present. You will revere the gold-embroidered garments in which your masters bedizen themselves, and you will never dream of examining the stains hidden under the embroidery. You will be moved by the big words which they pronounce in a sublime voice, and you will never see in their pockets the hereditary phrase-book from which they have taken them. You will punctiliously bring them your money and your services; the custom will seem to you just, and you will accept the goose-dogma, that a goose is bound to be roasted. But, on the other hand, you will tolerate and even love the world, if, penetrating to its nature, you take the trouble to explain or imitate its mechanism. You will be interested in passions by an artist's sympathy or a philosopher's comprehension; you will find them natural whilst admitting their force, or you will find them necessary whilst computing their connexion; you will cease to be indignant against the powers which produce fine spectacles, or will cease to be roused by the rebounds which the law of cause and effect had foretold. You will admire the world as a grand drama, or as an invincible development; and you will be preserved by the imagination or by logic from slander or disgust. You will extract from religion the high truths which dogmas hide, and the generous instincts which superstition conceals. You will perceive in the state the infinite benefits which no tyranny abolishes, and the sociable inclinations which no wickedness uproots. You will distinguish in science the solid doctrines which discussion never shakes, the liberal notions which the shock of systems purifies and expands, the splendid promises which the course of the present opens up to the ambition of the future. We can thus escape hatred by the nullity or the greatness of the prospect, by the inability to discover contrasts, or by the power to discover the harmony of contrasts. Raised above the first, sunk beneath the last, seeing evil and disorder, deprived of goodness and order, precluded from love and calmness, resigned to indignation and bitterness, Swift found neither a cause to cherish nor a doctrine to establish;[1] he employs the whole force of an excellently armed mind

[1] In his *Thoughts on Religion* (viii. 73) he says: 'The want of belief is a defect that ought to be concealed, when it cannot be overcome.' 'I look upon

and an excellently tempered character in denying and destroying: all his works are pamphlets.

III.

At this time, and in his hands, the newspaper in England attained its proper character and its greatest force. Literature entered the sphere of politics. To understand what the one became, we must understand what the other was: art depended upon political business, and the spirit of parties made the spirit of writers.

In France a theory arises—eloquent, harmonious, and generous; the young are enamoured of it, wear a cap and sing songs in its honour: at night, the citizens, whilst digesting their dinner, read it and delight in it; some, hotheaded, accept it, and prove to themselves their force of mind by ridiculing the retrogrades. On the other hand, the established people, prudent and timid, are mistrustful: being well off, they find that everything is well, and demand that kings shall continue as they are. Such are the two parties in France, very old, as all know; not very earnest, as all see. They must talk, be enthusiastic, reason on speculative opinions, glibly, about an hour a day, indulging but outwardly in this taste; but these parties are so well levelled, that they are at bottom all the same: when we understand them rightly, we will find in France only two parties, the men of twenty and the men of forty. English parties, on the other hand, were always compact and living bodies, united by interests of money, rank, and conscience, receiving theories only as standards or as a balance, a sort of secondary States, which, like the old orders in Rome, legally endeavour to monopolise the government. So, the English constitution was never more than a transaction between distinct powers, constrained to tolerate each other, disposed to encroach on each other, occupied in treating with each other. Politics for them are a domestic interest, for the French an occupation of the mind; Englishmen make them a business, the French a discussion.

Thus their pamphlets, notably Swift's, seem to us only half literary. For an argument to be literary, it must not address itself to an interest or a faction, but to the pure mind: it must be based on universal truths, rest on absolute justice, be able to touch all human reasons; otherwise, being local, it is simply useful: nothing is beautiful but what is general. It must also be developed regularly by analysis, and with exact divisions; its distribution must give a picture of pure reason; the order of ideas must be inviolable; every mind must be able to draw thence with ease a complete conviction; its method, its principles, must be sensible throughout, and at all times. The desire to prove well must be added to the art of proving well; the writer

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myself, in the capacity of a clergyman, to be one appointed by Providence for defending a post assigned me, and for gaining over as many enemies as I can.'

must announce his proof, repeat it, present it under all its faces, desire to penetrate minds, pursue them persistently in all their retreats; but he must treat his hearers like men worthy of comprehending and applying general truths; his discourse must be lively, noble, polished, and eager, so as to suit such subjects and such minds. It is thus that ancient prose and French prose are eloquent, and that political dissertations or religious controversies have endured as models of art.

This good taste and philosophy are wanting in the positive mind; it wishes to attain, not eternal beauty, but present success. Swift does not address men in general, but certain men. He does not speak to reasoners, but to a party; he does not care to teach a truth, but to make an impression; his aim is not to enlighten that isolated part of man, called his mind, but to move the mass of feelings and prejudices which constitute the actual man. Whilst he writes, his public is before his eyes: fat squires, puffed out with port wine and beef, accustomed at the end of their meals to bawl loyally for church and king; gentlemen farmers, bitter against London luxury and the new importance of merchants; ecclesiastics bred on pedantic sermons, and old-established hatred of dissenters and papists. These people have not mind enough to pursue a fine deduction or understand an abstract principle. One must calculate the facts they know, the ideas they have received, the interests that move them, and recall only these facts, reason only from these ideas, set in motion only these interests. It is thus Swift speaks, without development, without logical hits, without rhetorical effects, but with extraordinary force and success, in phrases whose justice his contemporaries inwardly felt, and which they accepted at once, because they simply told them, in a clear form and openly, what they murmured obscurely and to themselves. Such was the power of the *Examiner*, which in one year transformed the opinion of three kingdoms; and particularly of *Drapier's Letters*, which made a government draw back.

Small change was lacking in Ireland, and the English ministers had given William Wood a patent to coin one hundred and eight thousand pounds of copper money. A commission, of which Newton was a member, verified the pieces made, found them good, and several competent judges still think that the measure was loyal and serviceable to the land. Swift roused the people against it, speaking to them in an intelligible style, and triumphed over the common sense and the state.[1]

'Brethren, friends, countrymen, and fellow-subjects, what I intend now to say to you is, next to your duty to God and the care of your salvation, of the greatest

[1] Whatever has been said, I do not think that he wrote them in bad faith. It was possible, for Swift more than for another, to believe in a ministerial job. He seems to me to have been at bottom an honest man.

concern to you and your children: your bread and clothing, and every common necessary of life depend upon it. Therefore I do most earnestly exhort you, as men, as Christians, as parents, and as lovers of your country, to read this paper with the utmost attention, or get it read to you by others; which that you may do at the less expence, I have ordered the printer to sell it at the lowest rate.'[1]

You see popular distrust spring up at a glance; this is the style which reaches workmen and peasants; this simplicity, these details, are necessary to penetrate their belief. The author is like a draper, and they trust only men of their own condition. Swift goes on to accuse Wood, declaring that his copper pieces are not worth one-eighth of their nominal value. There is no trace of proofs: no proofs are required to convince the people; it is enough to repeat the same accusation again and again, to abound in intelligible examples, to strike eye and ear. The imagination once gained, they will go on shouting, convincing themselves by their own cries, intractably. Swift says to his adversaries:

'Your paragraph relates further that Sir Isaac Newton reported an assay taken at the Tower of Wood's metal; by which it appears that Wood had in all respects performed his contract. His contract! With whom? Was it with the Parliament or people of Ireland? Are not they to be the purchasers? But they detest, abhor, and reject it as corrupt, fraudulent, mingled with dirt and trash.'[2]

And a little farther on:

'His first proposal is, that he will be content to coin no more (than forty thousand pounds), unless *the exigencies of the trade require it*, although his patent empowers him to coin a far greater quantity. . . . To which if I were to answer, it should be thus: let Mr. Wood and his crew of founders and tinkers coin on, till there is not an old kettle left in the kingdom; let them coin old leather, tobacco-pipe clay, or the dirt in the street, and call their trumpery by what name they please, from a guinea to a farthing; we are not under any concern to know how he and his tribe of accomplices think fit to employ themselves. But I hope, and trust, that we are all, to a man, fully determined to have nothing to do with him or his ware.'[3]

Swift gets angry and does not answer. In fact, this is the best way to answer; to move such hearers you must move their blood and their nerves; then shopkeepers and farmers will turn up their sleeves, double their fists; and the good arguments of their opponents will only increase their desire to knock them down.

Now see how a mass of examples makes a gratuitous assertion probable:

'Your Newsletter says that an assay was made of the coin. How impudent and insupportable is this! Wood takes care to coin a dozen or two halfpence of good metal, sends them to the Tower, and they are approved; and these must answer all that he has already coined, or shall coin for the future. It is true, indeed, that a gentleman often sends to my shop for a pattern of stuff; I cut it

[1] *Drapier's Letters*, vii.; Letter 1, 97. [2] *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 2, 114.
[3] *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 2, 115.

fairly off, and if he likes it, he comes or sends and compares the pattern with the whole piece, and probably we come to a bargain. But if I were to buy a hundred sheep, and the grazier should bring me one single wether, fat and well fleeced, by way of pattern, and expect the same price round for the whole hundred, without suffering me to see them before he was paid, or giving me good security to restore my money for those that were lean, or shorn, or scabby, I would be none of his customer. I have heard of a man who had a mind to sell his house, and therefore carried a piece of brick in his pocket, which he showed as a pattern to encourage purchasers; and this is directly the case in point with Mr. Wood's assay.'[1]

A burst of laughter follows; butchers and bricklayers were gained over. To finish, Swift showed them a practical expedient, suited to their understanding and their condition:

'The common soldier, when he goes to the market or ale house, will offer his money; and if it be refused, perhaps he will swagger and hector, and threaten to beat the butcher or alewife, or take the goods by force, and throw them the bad half-pence. In this and the like cases, the shopkeeper or victualler, or any other tradesman, has no more to do than to demand ten times the price of his goods, if it is to be paid in Wood's money; for example, twenty-pence of that money for a quart of ale, and so in all things else, and never part with his goods till he gets the money.'[2]

Public clamour overcame the English Government; they withdrew the money and paid Wood a large indemnity. Such is the merit of Swift's arguments; good tools, trenchant and handy, neither elegant nor bright, but whose value is proved by their effect.

The whole beauty of these pamphlets is in their tone. They have neither the generous fire of Pascal, nor the bewildering gaiety of Beaumarchais, nor the chiselled delicacy of Paul Louis Courier, but an overwhelming air of superiority and a bitter and terrible rancour. Vast passion and pride, like the positive Drapier's mind just now described, have given all the blows their force. You should read his *Public Spirit of the Whigs*, against Steele. Page by page Steele is torn to pieces with a calmness and scorn never equalled. Swift approaches regularly, leaving no part unwounded, heaping wound on wound, every blow sure, knowing beforehand their reach and depth. Poor Steele, a vain, thoughtless fellow, is in his hands like Gulliver amongst the giants; it is a pity to see a contest so unequal; and this contest is pitiless. Swift crushes him carefully and easily, like an obnoxious animal. The unfortunate man, an old officer and semi-literary man, had made awkward use of constitutional words:

'Upon this rock the author . . . is perpetually splitting, as often as he ventures out beyond the narrow bounds of his literature. He has a confused remembrance of words since he left the university, but has lost half their meaning, and puts them together with no regard, except to their cadence; as I

[1] *Drapier's Letters*, vii.; Letter 2, 114.
[2] *Ibid.* vii.; Letter 1, 101.

remember, a fellow nailed up maps in a gentleman's closet, some sidelong, others upside down, the better to adjust them to the pannels.'[1]

When he judges he is worse than when he proves; witness his *Short Character of Thomas Earl of Wharton.* He pierces him with the formulas of official politeness; only an Englishman is capable of such phlegm and such haughtiness:

'I have had the honour of much conversation with his lordship, and am thoroughly convinced how indifferent he is to applause, and how insensible of reproach. . . . He is without the sense of shame, or glory, as some men are without the sense of smelling; and therefore, a good name to him is no more than a precious ointment would be to these. Whoever, for the sake of others, were to describe the nature of a serpent, a wolf, a crocodile or a fox, must be understood to do it without any personal love or hatred for the animals themselves. In the same manner his excellency is one whom I neither personally love nor hate. I see him at court, at his own house, and sometimes at mine, for I have the honour of his visits; and when these papers are public, it is odds but he will tell me, as he once did upon a like occasion, "that he is damnably mauled," and then, with the easiest transition in the world, ask about the weather, or time of the day; so that I enter on the work with more cheerfulness, because I am sure neither to make him angry, nor any way hurt his reputation; a pitch of happiness and security to which his excellency has arrived, and which no philosopher before him could reach. Thomas, Earl of Wharton, lord-lieutenant of Ireland, by the force of a wonderful constitution, has some years passed his grand climacteric without any visible effects of old age, either on his body or his mind; and in spite of a continual prostitution to those vices which usually wear out both. . . . Whether he walks or whistles, or swears, or talks bawdy, or calls names, he acquits himself in each, beyond a templar of three years standing. With the same grace, and in the same style, he will rattle his coachman in the midst of the street, where he is governor of the kingdom; and all this is without consequence, because it is his character, and what everybody expects. . . . The ends he has gained by lying, appear to be more owing to the frequency, than the art of them; his lies being sometimes detected in an hour, often in a day, and always in a week. . . . He swears solemnly he loves and will serve you; and your back is no sooner turned, but he tells those about him, you are a dog and a rascal. He goes constantly to prayers in the forms of his place, and will talk bawdy and blasphemy at the chapel door. He is a presbyterian in politics, and an atheist in religion; but he chooses at present to whore with a papist. In his commerce with mankind, his general rule is, to endeavour to impose on their understandings, for which he has but one receipt, a composition of lies and oaths. . . . He bears the gallantries of his lady with the indifference of a stoick; and thinks them well recompensed, by a return of children to support his family, without the fatigues of being a father. . . . He was never yet known to refuse or keep a promise, as I remember he told a lady, but with an exception to the promise he then made (which was to get her a pension), yet he broke even that, and, I confess, deceived us both. But here I desire to distinguish between a promise and a bargain; for he will be sure to keep

[1] *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, iv. 405. See also in the *Examiner* the pamphlet against Marlborough under the name of Crassus, and the comparison between Roman generosity and English meanness.

the latter, when he has the fairest offer. . . . But here I must desire the reader's pardon, if I cannot digest the following facts in so good a manner as I intended; because it is thought expedient, for some reasons, that the world should be informed of his excellency's merits as soon as possible. . . . As they are, they may serve for hints to any person who may hereafter have a mind to write memoirs of his excellency's life.'[1]

Throughout this piece Swift's voice has remained calm; not a muscle of his face has moved; no smile, flash of the eye, gesture; he speaks like a statue; but his anger grows by constraint, and burns the more that it shines the less.

This is why his ordinary style is grave irony. It is the weapon of pride, meditation, and force. The man who employs it is self-contained in the height of the storm within; he is too proud to make a show of his passion; he does not take the public into his confidence; he elects to be solitary in his soul; he would be ashamed to surrender; he means and knows how to keep absolute possession of himself. Thus collected, he understands better and suffers more; no fit of passion relieves his wrath or draws away his attention; he feels all the points and penetrates to the depths of the opinion which he detests; he multiplies his pain and his knowledge, and spares himself neither wound nor reflection. We must see Swift in this attitude, impassible in appearance, but with stiffening muscles, a heart scorched with hatred, writing with a terrible smile such pamphlets as this:

'It may perhaps be neither safe nor prudent, to argue against the abolishing of Christianity, at a juncture, when all parties appear so unanimously determined upon the point. . . . However, I know not how, whether from the affectation of singularity, or the perverseness of human nature, but so it unhappily falls out, that I cannot be entirely of this opinion. Nay, though I were sure an order were issued for my immediate prosecution by the attorney-general, I should still confess, that in the present posture of our affairs, at home or abroad, I do not yet see the absolute necessity of extirpating the Christian religion from among us. This perhaps may appear too great a paradox, even for our wise and paradoxical age to endure; therefore I shall handle it with all tenderness, and with the utmost deference to that great and profound majority, which is of another sentiment. . . . I hope no reader imagines me so weak to stand up in the defence of real Christianity, such as used, in primitive times (if we may believe the authors of those ages), to have an influence upon men's belief and actions; to offer at the restoring of that, would indeed be a wild project; it would be to dig up foundations; to destroy at one blow all the wit, and half the learning of the kingdom. . . . Every candid reader will easily understand my discourse to be intended only in defence of nominal Christianity; the other having been for some time wholly laid aside by general consent, as utterly inconsistent with our present schemes of wealth and power.'[2]

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[1] Swift's Works, iv. 148.

[2] *An Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity might be attended with some Inconveniences*, viii. 184. The Whigs were herein attacked as the friends of freethinkers.

Let us then examine the advantages which this abolition of the title and name of Christian might have:

'It is likewise urged, that there are, by computation, in this kingdom above ten thousand parsons, whose revenues, added to those of my lords the bishops, would suffice to maintain at least two hundred young gentlemen of wit and pleasure, and freethinking, enemies to priestcraft, narrow principles, pedantry, and prejudices, who might be an ornament to the court and town.'[1]

'It is likewise proposed as a great advantage to the public that if we once discard the system of the gospel, all religion will of course be banished for ever; and consequently along with it, those grievous prejudices of education, which under the names of virtue, conscience, honour, justice, and the like, are so apt to disturb the peace of human minds, and the notions whereof are so hard to be eradicated, by right reason, or free-thinking.'[2]

Then he concludes by doubling the insult:

'I am very sensible how much the gentlemen of wit and pleasure are apt to murmur, and be shocked at the sight of so many daggled-tail parsons, who happen to fall in their way, and offend their eyes; but at the same time, those wise reformers do not consider, what an advantage and felicity it is, for great wits to be always provided with objects of scorn and contempt, in order to exercise and improve their talents, and divert their spleen from falling on each other, or on themselves; especially when all this may be done, without the least imaginable danger to their persons. And to urge another argument of a parallel nature: if Christianity were once abolished, how could the freethinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject, so calculated in all points whereon to display their abilities? What wonderful productions of wit should we be deprived of, from those, whose genius, by continual practice, has been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives, against religion, and would, therefore, never be able to shine or distinguish themselves upon any other subject? We are daily complaining of the great decline of wit among us, and would we take away the greatest, perhaps the only topic we have left?'[3]

'I do very much apprehend, that in six months time after the act is passed for the extirpation of the gospel, the Bank and East India stock may fall at least one per cent. And since that is fifty more, than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture, for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason we should be at so great a loss, merely for the sake of destroying it.'[4]

Swift is only a combatant, I admit; but when we see at a glance this common sense and this pride, this empire over the passions of others, and this empire over himself, this force of hatred, and this employment of hatred, we judge that there have rarely been such combatants. He is a pamphleteer as Hannibal was a *condottiere*.

IV.

On the night after the battle we usually unbend; we sport, we make fun, we talk in prose and verse; but this night is a continuation of the day, and the mind which leaves its trace in matters of business leaves its trace in amusements.

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[1] *An Argument*, etc., 188. [2] *Ibid.* 192. [3] *Ibid.* 196.
[4] *Ibid.* 200; final words of the *Argument*.

What is gayer than Voltaire's *soirées?* He rails; but do you find any murderous intention in his railleries? He gets angry; but do you perceive a malignant or evil character in his passions? In him all is amiable. In an instant, through the necessity of action, he strikes, caresses, changes a hundred times his tone, his face, with abrupt movements, impetuous sallies, sometimes as a child, always as a man of the world, of taste and conversation. He wishes to entertain me; he conducts me at once through a thousand ideas, without effort, to amuse himself, to amuse me. The agreeable host who desires to please and who knows how to please, who only dreads ennui, who does not distrust me, who is not constrained, who is always himself, who sparkles with ideas, naturalness, sportiveness? If I was with him, and he rallied me, I should not be angry; I should fall into his tone, I should laugh at myself, I should feel that he only wished to pass an agreeable hour, that he did not mean it, that he treated me as an equal and a guest, that he broke out into pleasantries as a winter fire into sparks, and that he was none the less pleasant, wholesome, amusing.

Heaven grant that Swift may never jest at my expense. The positive mind is too solid and too dry to be gay and amiable. When he takes to ridicule, he does not sport with it superficially, he studies it; he goes into it gravely, masters it, knows all its subdivisions and its proofs. This deep knowledge can only produce a withering pleasantry. Swift's, at bottom, is but a *reductio ad absurdum*, altogether scientific. For instance, *The Art of Political Lying*[1] is a didactic treatise, whose plan might serve for a model. 'In the first chapter of this excellent treatise he (the author) reasons philosophically concerning the nature of the soul of man, and those qualities which render it susceptible of lies. He supposes the soul to be of the nature of a pleno-cylindrical speculum, or looking-glass. . . . The plain side represents objects just as they are; and the cylindrical side, by the rule of catoptrics, must needs represent true objects false, and false objects true. In his second chapter he treats of the nature of political lying; in the third of the lawfulness of political lying. The fourth chapter is wholly employed in this question, "Whether the right of coinage of political lies be wholly in the government."' Again, nothing could be stranger, more worthy of an archæological society, than the argument in which he convicts a humorous piece of Pope's[2] as an insidious pamphlet against the religion of the state. His *Art of Sinking in Poetry*[3] has all the appearance of good rhetoric; the principles are laid down, the divisions justified; the examples chosen with extraordinary precision and method; it is perfect reason employed in the service of folly.

His passions, like his mind, were too strong. If he wishes to scratch, he tears; his pleasantry is gloomy; by way of a joke, he drags his

[1] Arbuthnot is said to have written the whole or at least part of it.—Tr.

[2] *The Rape of the Lock.* [3] Pope, Arbuthnot, and Swift wrote it together.

reader through all the disgusting details of sickness and death. An old shoemaker, Partridge, had turned astrologer; Swift, imperturbably cool, assumes an astrologer's title, writes maxims on the duties of the profession, and to inspire confidence, begins to predict:

'My first prediction is but a trifle; yet I will mention it, to show how ignorant those sottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: it relates to Partridge the almanack-maker; I have consulted the star of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time.'[1]

The 29th of March being past, he relates how the undertaker came to hang Partridge's rooms 'in close mourning;' then Ned, the sexton, asking 'whether the grave is to be plain or bricked;' then Mr. White, the carpenter, to screw down the coffin; then the stone-cutter with his monument. Lastly, a successor comes and sets up in the neighbourhood, saying in his printed directions, 'that he lives in the house of the late ingenious Mr. John Partridge, an eminent practitioner in leather, physic, and astrology.'[2] You may tell beforehand the protestations of poor Partridge. Swift in his reply proves that he is dead, and is astonished at his hard words:

'To call a man a fool and villain, an impudent fellow, only for differing from him in a point merely speculative, is, in my humble opinion, a very improper style for a person of his education. . . . I will appeal to Mr. Partridge himself, whether it be probable I could have been so indiscreet, to begin my predictions, with the only falsehood that ever was pretended to be in them? and this in an affair at home.'[3]

Mr. Partridge is mistaken, or deceives the public, or would cheat his heirs. This gloomy pleasantry becomes elsewhere still more gloomy. Swift pretends that his enemy, the bookseller Curll, has just been poisoned, and relates his agony. A house-surgeon of a hospital would not write a more repulsive diary more coldly. The details, worked out with the completeness of a Hogarth, are admirably minute, but disgusting. We laugh, or rather we grin, as before the vagaries of a madman in an asylum. Swift in his gaiety is always tragical; nothing unbends him; even when he serves, he pains you. In his *Journal to Stella* there is a sort of imperious austerity; his compliments are those of a master to a child. The charm and happiness of a young girl of sixteen cannot soften him. She has just married, and he tells her that love is a 'ridiculous passion, which has no being but in playbooks and romances;' then he adds, with perfect brutality:

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[1] *Predictions for the Year* 1708 *by Isaac Bickerstaff*, ix. 156.

[2] These quotations are taken from a humorous pamphlet, *Squire Bickerstaff Detected*, written by Dr. Yalden. See Swift's Works, ix. 176.—Tr.

[3] *A Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff*, ix. 186.

'I never yet knew a tolerable woman to be fond of her sex; . . . your sex employ more thought, memory, and application to be fools than would serve to make them wise and useful. . . . When I reflect on this, I cannot conceive you to be human creatures, but a sort of species hardly a degree above a monkey; who has more diverting tricks than any of you, is an animal less mischievous and expensive, might in time be a tolerable critic in velvet and brocade, and, for aught I know, would equally become them.'[1]

Will poetry calm such a mind? Here, as elsewhere, he is most unfortunate. He is excluded from great transports of imagination, as well as from the lively digressions of conversation. He can attain neither the sublime nor the agreeable; he has neither the artist's rapture, nor the entertainment of the man of the world. Two similar sounds at the end of two equal lines have always consoled the greatest troubles: the old muse, after three thousand years, is a young and divine nurse; and her song lulls the sickly natures whom she still visits, like the young, flourishing races amongst whom she has appeared. The involuntary music, in which thought wraps itself, hides ugliness and unveils nature. Feverish man, after the labours of the evening and the anguish of the night, sees at morning the beaming whiteness of the opening heaven; he gets rid of himself, and the joy of nature from all sides enters with oblivion into his heart. If misery pursues him, the poetic afflatus, unable to wipe it out, transforms it; it becomes ennobled, he loves it, and thenceforth he bears it; for the only thing to which he cannot resign himself is littleness. Neither Faust nor Manfred have exhausted human grief; they drank from the cruel cup a generous wine, they did not reach the dregs. They enjoyed themselves and nature; they tasted the greatness which was in them, and the beauty of creation; they pressed with their bruised hands all the thorns with which necessity has made our way thorny, but they saw them blossom with roses, fostered by the purest of their noble blood. There is nothing of the sort in Swift: what is wanting most in his verses is poetry. The positive mind can neither love nor understand it; it sees therein only a machine or a fashion, and employs it only for vanity and conventionality. When in his youth he attempted Pindaric odes, he failed lamentably. I cannot remember a line of his which indicates a genuine sentiment of nature: he saw in the forests only logs of wood, and in the fields only sacks of corn. He employed mythology, as we put on a wig, ill-timed, wearily and scornfully. His best piece, *Cadenus and Vanessa*,[2] is a poor, threadbare allegory. To praise Vanessa, he supposes that the nymphs and shepherds pleaded before Venus, the first against men, the second against women; and that Venus, wishing to end the debates, made in Vanessa a model of perfection. What can such a conception furnish but flat apostrophes and pedantic comparisons? Swift, who

[1] *Letter to a very young Lady on her Marriage*, ix. 420.
[2] *Cadenus and Vanessa*, xiv. 441.

somewhere gives a recipe for an epic poem, is here the first to make use of it. And even his rude prosaic freaks tear this Greek frippery at every turn. He puts a legal procedure into heaven; he makes Venus use all kinds of technical terms. He introduces witnesses, 'questions on the fact, bill with costs dismiss'd.' They talk so loud that the goddess fears to lose her influence, to be driven from Olympus, to be

> 'Shut out from heaven and earth,
> Fly to the sea, my place of birth:
> There live with daggled mermaids pent,
> And keep on fish perpetual Lent.'

When elsewhere he relates the touching history of *Baucis and Philemon*,[1] he degrades it by a travesty. He does not love the ancient nobleness and beauty; the two gods become in his hands begging friars, Philemon and Baucis Kentish peasants. For a recompense, their house becomes a church, and Philemon a parson:

> 'His talk was now of tithes and dues;
> He smok'd his pipe and read the news. . . .
> Against dissenters would repine,
> And stood up firm for "right divine."'

Wit luxuriates, incisive, in little compact verses, vigorously coined, of extreme conciseness, facility, precision; but compared to La Fontaine, it is wine turned vinegar. Even when he comes to the charming Vanessa, his vein is still the same: to praise her childhood, he puts her name first on the list, as a little model girl, just like a schoolmaster:

> 'And all their conduct would be tried
> By her, as an unerring guide:
> Offending daughters oft would hear
> Vanessa's praise rung in their ear:
> Miss Betty, when she does a fault,
> Lets fall her knife, or spills the salt,
> Will thus be by her mother chid:
> "'Tis what Vanessa never did!"'[2]

A strange way of admiring Vanessa, and of proving his admiration for her. He calls her a nymph, and treats her like a school-girl! Cadenus 'now could praise, esteem, approve, but understood not what was love!' Nothing could be truer, and Stella felt it, like others. The verses which he writes every year on her birthday, are a pedagogue's censures and praises; if he gives her any good marks, it is with restrictions. Once he inflicts on her a little sermon on want of patience; again, by way of compliment, he concocts this delicate warning:

> 'Stella, this day is thirty-four
> (We shan't dispute a year or more).
> However, Stella, be not troubled,
> Although thy size and years are doubled

[1] *Baucis and Philemon*, xiv. 83. [2] *Cadenus and Vanessa*, xiv. 448.

Since first I saw thee at sixteen,
The brightest virgin on the green;
So little is thy form declin'd,
Made up so largely in thy mind.'

And he insists with exquisite taste:

'O, would it please the gods to split
Thy beauty, size, and years and wit!
No age could furnish out a pair
Of nymphs so graceful, wise, and fair.'[1]

Decidedly this man is an artisan, strong of arm, terrible at his work and in a fray, but narrow of soul, treating a woman as if she were a beam. Rhyme and rhythm are only business-like tools, which have served him to press and launch his thought; he has put nothing but prose into them: poetry was too fine to be grasped by those coarse hands.

But in prosaic subjects, what truth and force! How this masculine nakedness crushes the artificial poetry of Addison and Pope! There are no epithets; he leaves his thought as he conceived it, valuing it for and by itself, needing neither ornaments, nor preparation, nor extension; above the tricks of the profession, scholastic conventionalisms, the vanity of the rhymester, the difficulties of the art; master of his subject and of himself. This simplicity and naturalness astonish us in verse. Here, as elsewhere, his originality is entire, and his genius creative; he surpasses his classical and timid age; he tyrannises over form, breaks it, dare utter anything, spares himself no strong word. Acknowledge the greatness of this invention and audacity; he alone is a superior, who finds everything and copies nothing. What a biting comicality in the *Grand Question Debated!* He has to represent the entrance of a captain into a castle, his airs, his insolence, his folly, and the admiration caused by these qualities! The lady serves him first; the servants stare at him:

'The parsons for envy are ready to burst;
The servants amaz'd are scarce ever able
To keep off their eyes, as they wait at the table;
And Molly and I have thrust in our nose
To peep at the captain in all his fine clothes.
Dear madam, be sure he's a fine spoken man,
Do but hear on the clergy how glib his tongue ran;
"And madam," says he, "if such dinners you give,
You'll ne'er want for parsons as long as you live.
I ne'er knew a parson without a good nose;
But the devil's as welcome wherever he goes;
G—d—me! they bid us reform and repent,
But, z—s! by their looks they never keep Lent:

[1] *Verses on Stella's Birthday*, March 13, 1718–19, xiv. 469.

Mister curate, for all your grave looks, I'm afraid
You cast a sheep's eye on her ladyship's maid:
I wish she would lend you her pretty white hand
In mending your cassock, and smoothing your band"
(For the dean was so shabby, and look'd like a ninny,
That the captain suppos'd he was curate to Jinny).
"Whenever you see a cassock and gown,
A hundred to one but it covers a clown.
Observe how a parson comes into a room,
G—d—me, he hobbles as bad as my groom;
A scholard, when just from his college broke loose,
Can hardly tell how to cry bo to a goose;
Your *Noveds*, and *Bluturks*, and *Omurs*,[1] and stuff,
By G—, they don't signify this pinch of snuff;
To give a young gentleman right education,
The army's the only good school in the nation."'[2]

This has been *seen*, and herein lies the beauty of Swift's verses: they are personal; they are not developed themes, but impressions felt and observations collected. Read *The Journal of a Modern Lady*, *The Furniture of a Lady's Mind*, and other pieces by the dozen: they are dialogues transcribed or opinions put on paper after quitting a drawing-room. *The Progress of Marriage* represents a dean of fifty-two married to a young worldly coquette; do you not see in this title alone all the fears of the bachelor of St. Patrick's? What diary is more familiar and more pungent than his verses on his own death?

'"He hardly breathes." "The Dean is dead."
Before the passing bell begun,
The news through half the town has run;
"O may we all for death prepare!
What has he left? and who's his heir?"
"I know no more than what the news is;
'Tis all bequeath'd to public uses."
"To public uses! there's a whim!
What had the public done for him?
Mere envy, avarice, and pride:
He gave it all—but first he died.
And had the Dean in all the nation
No worthy friend, no poor relation?
So ready to do strangers good,
Forgetting his own flesh and blood!" . . .
Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
A week, and Arbuthnot a day. . . .
My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learn'd to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps:
The Dean is dead (pray what is trumps?)
Then, Lord, have mercy on his soul!
(Ladies, I'll venture for the vole.)

[1] Ovids, Plutarchs, Homers. [2] *The Grand Question Debated*, xv. 153.

Six Deans, they say, must bear the pall.
(I wish I knew what king to call.)
Madam, your husband will attend
The funeral of so good a friend?
No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight,
And he's engaged to-morrow night:
My Lady Club will take it ill,
If he should fail her at quadrille.
He lov'd the Dean—(I lead a heart),
But dearest friends, they say, must part.
His time was come: he ran his race;
We hope he's in a better place.'[1]

Such is the inventory of human friendships. All poetry exalts the mind, but this depresses it; instead of concealing reality, it unveils it; instead of creating illusions, it removes them. When he wishes to give a *description of the morning*,[2] he shows us the street-sweepers, the 'watchful bailiffs,' and imitates the different street cries. When he wishes to paint the rain,[3] he describes 'filth of all hues and odours,' the 'swelling kennels,' the 'dead cats,' 'turnip-tops,' 'stinking sprats,' which 'come tumbling down the flood.' His long verses whirl all this filth in their eddies. We smile to see poetry degraded to this use; we seem to be at a masquerade; it is a queen travestied into a rough country girl. We stop, we look on, with the sort of pleasure we feel in drinking a bitter draught. Truth is always good to know, and in the splendid piece which artists show us, we need a manager to tell us the number of the hired applauders and of the supernumeraries.

It would be well if he only drew up such a list! Numbers look ugly, but they only affect the mind; other things, the oil of the lamps, the odours of the side scenes, all that we cannot name, remains to be told. I cannot do more than hint at the length to which Swift carries us; but this I must do, for these extremes are the supreme effort of his despair and his genius: we must touch upon them in order to measure and know him. He drags poetry not only through the mud, but into the filth; he rolls in it like a raging madman, he enthrones himself in it, and bespatters all passers-by. Compared with his, all foul words are decent and agreeable. In Aretin and Brantôme, in La Fontaine and Voltaire, there is a suspicion of pleasure. With the first unchecked sensuality, with the others malicious gaiety, are excuses; we are scandalised, not disgusted; we do not like to see in a man a bull's fury or an ape's buffoonery; but the bull is so eager and strong, the ape so spirited and smart, that we end by looking on or being amused. Then, again, however coarse the pictures may be, they speak of the accompaniments of love; Swift touches only upon the results of digestion, and that only with disgust and revenge; he pours them out

[1] *On the Death of Dr. Swift*, xiv. 331.
[2] *A Description of a City Shower*, xiv. 94.
[3] Swift's Works, xiv. 93.

with horror and sneering at the wretches whom he describes. He must not in this be compared to Rabelais: that good giant, that drunken doctor, rolls himself joyously about on his dunghill, thinking no evil; the dunghill is warm, convenient, a fine place to philosophise and sleep off one's wine. Raised to this enormity, and enjoyed with this heedlessness, the bodily functions become poetical. When the casks are emptied down his throat, and the viands are gorged, we sympathise with so much bodily comfort; in the heavings of this colossal belly and the laughter of this homeric mouth, we see, as through a mist, the relics of bacchanal religions, the fecundity, the monstrous joy of nature; these are the splendours and disorders of its first births. The cruel positive mind, on the contrary, clings only to vileness; it will only see what is behind things; armed with sorrow and boldness, it spares no ignoble detail, no obscene word. Swift enters the dressing-room,[1] relates the disenchantments of love,[2] dishonours it by a medley of drugs and physic,[3] describes the cosmetics and a great many more things.[4] He takes his evening walk by solitary walls,[5] and in these pitiable pryings has his microscope ever in his hand. Judge what he sees and suffers; this is his ideal beauty and his jesting conversation, and you may fancy that he has for philosophy, as for poetry and politics, execration and disgust.

V.

He wrote the *Tale of a Tub* at Sir W. Temple's, amidst all kind of reading, as an abstract of truth and science. Hence this tale is the satire of all science and all truth.

Of religion first. He seems here to defend the Church of England; but what church and what creed are not involved in his attack? To enliven his subject, he profanes and reduces questions of dogma to a question of clothes. A father had three sons, Peter, Martin, and Jack; he left each of them a coat at his death,[6] warning them to wear it clean and brush it often. The three brothers obeyed for some time, and travelled sensibly, slaying 'a reasonable quantity of giants and dragons.'[7] Unfortunately, having come up to a town, they adopted its manners, fell in love with several fashionable ladies, the Duchess d'Argent, Madame de Grands Titres, and the Countess d'Orgueil,[8] and to gain their favours, began to live as gallants, taking snuff, swearing, rhyming, and contracting debts, keeping horses, fighting duels, whoring, killing bailiffs. A sect was established who

'Held the universe to be a large suit of clothes, which invests everything: that the earth is invested by the air; the air is invested by the stars, and the stars

[1] *The Lady's Dressing-room.* [2] *Strephon and Chloe.*
[3] *A Love Poem from a Physician.* [4] *The Progress of Beauty.*
[5] *The Problem,* and *The Examination of Certain Abuses.*
[6] Christian truth. [7] Persecutions and contests of the primitive church.
[8] Covetousness, ambition, and pride; the three vices that the ancient fathers inveighed against.

are invested by the primum mobile. . . . What is that which some call land, but a fine coat faced with green? or the sea, but a waistcoat of water-tabby? . . . You will find how curious journeyman Nature has been, to trim up the vegetable beaux: observe how sparkish a periwig adorns the head of a beech, and what a fine doublet of white sattin is worn by the birch. . . . Is not religion a cloak; honesty a pair of shoes worn out in the dirt; self-love a surtout; vanity a shirt; and conscience a pair of breeches; which, though a cover for lewdness as well as nastiness, is easily slipt down for the service of both? . . . If certain ermines and furs be placed in a certain position, we style them a judge; and so an apt conjunction of lawn and black sattin, we entitle a bishop.'[1]

Others held also 'that the soul was the outward, and the body the inward clothing. . . . This last they proved by Scripture, because in them we live, and move, and have our being.' Thus our three brothers, having only very simple clothes, were embarrassed. For instance, the fashion at this time was for shoulder-knots, and their father's will expressly forbade them to 'add to or diminish from their coats one thread:'

'In this unhappy case they went immediately to consult their father's will, read it over and over, but not a word of the shoulder-knot. . . . After much thought, one of the brothers, who happened to be more book-learned than the other two, said, he had found an expedient. "It is true," said he, "there is nothing in this will, *totidem verbis*, making mention of Shoulder-Knot; but I dare conjecture, we may find them inclusive, or *totidem syllabis*." This distinction was immediately approved by all; and so they fell again to examine; but their evil star had so directed the matter, that the first syllable was not to be found in the whole writings. Upon which disappointment, he, who found the former evasion, took heart and said: "Brothers, there are yet hopes, for though we cannot find them *totidem verbis*, nor *totidem syllabis*, I dare engage we shall make them out *tertio modo*, or *totidem litteris*." This discovery was also highly commended; upon which they fell once more to the scrutiny, and picked out S, H, O, U, L, D, E, R; when the same planet, enemy to their repose, had wonderfully contrived that a K was not to be found. Here was a weighty difficulty; but the distinguishing brother . . . now his hand was in, proved by a very good argument, that K was a modern illegitimate letter, unknown to the learned ages, nor anywhere to be found in ancient manuscripts. . . . Upon this all farther difficulty vanished; shoulder-knots were made clearly out to be *jure paterno*, and our three gentlemen swaggered with as large and flaunting ones as the best.'[2]

Other interpretations admitted gold lace, and a codicil authorised flame-coloured satin linings:

'Next winter a player, hired for the purpose by the corporation of fringe-makers, acted his part in a new comedy, all covered with silver fringe, and according to the laudable custom gave rise to that fashion. Upon which the brothers consulting their father's will, to their great astonishment found these words: "Item, I charge and command my said three sons to wear no sort of silver-fringe upon or about their said coats," etc. . . . However, after some pause, the brother so often mentioned for his erudition, who was well skilled in criticisms, had found in a certain author, which he said should be nameless, that the same word, which

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, xi. sec. 2, 79. [2] *Ibid.* 83.

in the will is called fringe, does also signify a broomstick: and doubtless ought to have the same interpretation in this paragraph. This another of the brothers disliked, because of that epithet silver, which could not, he humbly conceived, in propriety of speech, be reasonably applied to a broomstick; but it was replied upon him that this epithet was understood in a mythological and allegorical sense. However, he objected again, why their father should forbid them to wear a broomstick on their coats, a caution that seemed unnatural and impertinent; upon which, he was taken up short, as one who spoke irreverently of a mystery, which doubtless was very useful and significant, but ought not to be over-curiously pried into, or nicely reasoned upon.'[1]

In the end the scholastic brother grew weary of searching farther 'evasions,' locked up the old will in a strong box, authorised by tradition the fashions which became him, and having contrived to be left a legacy, styled himself My Lord Peter. His brothers, treated like servants, were discarded from his house; they reopened the will of their father, and began to understand it. Martin the Anglican, to reduce his clothes to the primitive simplicity, brought off a large handful of points, stripped away ten dozen yards of fringe, rid his coat of a huge quantity of gold-lace, but kept a few embroideries, which could not 'be got away without damaging the cloth.' Jack the Puritan tore off all in his enthusiasm, and was found in tatters, moreover envious of Martin, and half mad. He then joined the Æolists, or inspired admirers of the wind, who pretend that the spirit, or breath, or wind, is heavenly, and contains all knowledge:

'First, it is generally affirmed or confessed that learning puffeth men up; and secondly they proved it by the following syllogism: words are but wind; and learning is nothing but words; ergo learning is nothing but wind. . . . This, when blown up to its perfection, ought not to be covetously hoarded up, stifled, or hid under a bushel, but freely communicated to mankind. Upon these reasons, and others of equal weight, the wise Æolists affirm the gift of belching to be the noblest act of a rational creature. . . . At certain seasons of the year, you might behold the priests among them in vast number . . . linked together in a circular chain, with every man a pair of bellows applied to his neighbour's breech, by which they blew each other to the shape and size of a tun; and for that reason with great propriety of speech, did usually call their bodies their vessels.'[2]

After this explanation of theology, religious quarrels, and mystical inspirations, what is left, even of the Anglican Church? She is a sensible, useful, political cloak, but what else? Like a brush used with too strong a hand, the buffoonery has carried away the cloth as well as the stain. Swift has put out a fire, I allow; but, like Gulliver at Lilliput, the people saved by him must hold their nose, to admire the right application of the liquid, and the energy of the engine that saves them.

Religion drowned, he turns against science; for the digressions with which he interrupts his story to confute and mock the modern

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, 88. [2] *Ibid.* sec. 8, 146.

sages are attached to his tale by the slenderest ties. The book opens with introductions, prefaces, dedications, and other appendices generally employed to swell books—violent caricatures heaped up against the vanity and prolixity of authors. He professes himself one of them, and announces their discoveries. Admirable discoveries! The first of their commentaries will be on

'*Tom Thumb*, whose author was a Pythagorean philosopher. This dark treatise contains the whole scheme of the Metempsychosis, deducing the progress of the soul through all her stages. *Whittington and his Cat* is the work of that mysterious rabbi Jehuda Hannasi, containing a defence of the Gemara of the Jerusalem Misna, and its just preference to that of Babylon, contrary to the vulgar opinion.'[1]

He himself announces that he is going to publish 'A Panegyrical Essay upon the Number Three; a General History of Ears; a Modest Defence of the Proceedings of the Rabble in all Ages; an Essay on the Art of Canting, philosophically, physically, and musically considered;' and he engages his readers to try by their solicitations to get from him these treatises, which will change the appearance of the world. Then, turning against the philosophers and the critics, sifters of texts, he proves to them, according to their own fashion, that the ancients mentioned them. Can we find anywhere a more biting parody on forced interpretations:

'The types are so apposite and the applications so necessary and natural, that it is not easy to conceive how any reader of a modern age or taste could overlook them. . . . For first; Pausanias is of an opinion, that the perfection of writing correct was entirely owing to the institution of critics; and, that he can possibly mean no other than the true critic is, I think, manifest from the following description. He says, they were a race of men, who delighted to nibble at the superfluities and excrescences of books; which the learned at length observing, took warning, of their own accord, to lop the luxuriant, the rotten, the dead, the sapless, and the overgrown branches from their works. But now, all this he cunningly shades under the following allegory: that the Nauplians in Argos learned the art of pruning their vines, by observing that when an ass had browsed upon one of them, it thrived the better, and bore fairer fruits. Herodotus, holding the very same hieroglyph, speaks much plainer, and almost *in terminis*. He has been so bold as to tax the true critics of ignorance and malice; telling us openly, for I think nothing can be plainer, that in the western part of Libya, there were asses with horns.'[2]

Then follow a multitude of pitiless sarcasms. Swift has the genius of insult; he is an inventor of irony, as Shakspeare of poetry; and as beseems an extreme force, he goes to extremes in his thought and art. He lashes reason after science, and leaves nothing of the whole human mind. With a medical seriousness he establishes that vapours are exhaled from the whole body, which, 'getting possession of the brain,' leave it healthy if they are not abundant, but excite it if they

[1] *A Tale of a Tub*, Introduction, 72.
[2] *Ibid.* sec. 3; *A Digression concerning Critics*, 97.

are; that in the first case they make peaceful individuals, in the second great politicians, founders of religions, and deep philosophers, that is, fools, so that folly is the source of all human genius and all the institutions of the universe. This is why it is very wrong to keep men shut up in Bedlam, and a commission appointed to examine them would find in this academy imprisoned geniuses 'which might produce admirable instruments for the several offices in a state ecclesiastical, civil, and military.'

'Is any student tearing his straw in piece-meal, swearing and blaspheming, biting his grate, foaming at the mouth? . . . let the right worshipful commissioners of inspection give him a regiment of dragoons, and send him into Flanders among the rest. . . . You will find a third gravely taking the dimensions of his kennel; a person of foresight and insight, though kept quite in the dark. . . . He walks duly in one pace . . . talks much of hard times and taxes and the whore of Babylon; bars up the wooden window of his cell constantly at eight o'clock, dreams of fire. . . . Now what a figure would all those acquirements amount to if the owner were sent into the city among his brethren! Now is it not amazing to think the society of Warwick-lane should have no more concern for the recovery of so useful a member? . . . I shall not descend so minutely, as to insist upon the vast number of beaux, fiddlers, poets, and politicians that the world might recover by such a reformation. . . . Even I myself, the author of these momentous truths, am a person whose imaginations are hard-mouthed, and exceedingly disposed to run away with his reason, which I have observed, from long experience, to be a very light rider, and easily shaken off; upon which account my friends will never trust me alone, without a solemn promise to vent my speculations in this, or the like manner, for the universal benefit of mankind.'[1]

Wretched he who knows himself and mocks himself. What madman's laughter, and what a sob in this hoarse gaiety! What remains for him but to slaughter the remainder of human invention? Who does not see here the despair from which sprang the academy of Lagado? Is there not here a foretaste of madness in this intense meditation of absurdity? His mathematician, who, to teach geometry, makes his pupils swallow wafers on which he writes his theorems; his moralist, who, to reconcile political parties, proposes to saw off the occiput and brain of each 'opposite party-man,' and 'to let the occiputs thus cut off be interchanged;' his economist again, who tries 'to reduce human excrement to its original food.' Swift is akin to these, and is the most wretched of all, because he nourishes his mind, like them, on filth and folly, and he has more knowledge and disgust than they.

It is sad to exhibit human folly, it is sadder to exhibit human perversity: the heart is more a part of ourselves than reason: we suffer less in seeing extravagance and folly than wickedness and baseness, and I find Swift more agreeable in his *Tale of a Tub* than in *Gulliver*.

All his talent and all his passions are assembled in this book; the positive mind has impressed upon it its form and force. There is

[1] *A Tale of a Tub; A Digression concerning Madness*, sec. 11, 167.

nothing agreeable in the fiction or the style; it is the journal of an ordinary man, a surgeon, then a captain, who describes coolly and sensibly the events and objects which he has seen; no feeling for the beautiful, no appearance of admiration or passion, no accent. Banks and Cook relate thus. Swift only seeks the natural, and he attains it. His art consists in taking an absurd supposition, and deducing seriously the effects to which it leads. It is the logical and technical mind of a mechanician, who, imagining the decrease or increase in a wheelwork, perceives the result of the changes, and writes down the record. His whole pleasure is in seeing these results clearly, and by a solid reasoning. He marks the dimensions, and so forth, like a good engineer and a statistician, omitting no trivial and positive detail, explaining cookery, stabling, politics: in this he has no equal but De Foe. The loadstone machine which sustains the flying island, the entrance of Gulliver in Lilliput, and the inventory of his property, his arrival and maintenance among the Yahoos, carry us with them; no mind knew better the ordinary laws of nature and human life; no mind shut itself up more strictly in this knowledge; none was ever more exact or more limited.

But what a vehemence in this dryness! How ridiculous our interests and passions seem, degraded to the littleness of Lilliput, or compared to the vastness of Brobdignag! What is beauty, when the handsomest body, seen with piercing eyes, seems horrible? What is our power, when an insect, king of an ant-hill, can be called, like our princes, 'sublime majesty, delight and terror of the universe?' What is our homage worth, when a pigmy 'is taller, by almost the breadth of a nail, than any of his court, which alone is enough to strike an awe into his beholders?' Three-fourths of our sentiment are follies, and the weakness of our organs is the only cause of our veneration or love.

Society repels us still more than man. At Laputa, at Lilliput, amongst the horses and giants, Swift rages against it, and is never tired of abusing and reviling it. In his eyes, 'ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator; laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them.'[1] A noble is a wretch, corrupted body and soul, 'combining in himself all the diseases and vices transmitted by ten generations of rakes and rascals. A lawyer is a hired liar, wont by twenty years of roguery to pervert the truth if he is an advocate, and to sell it if he is a judge. A minister of state is a go-between, who, having disposed of his wife,' or brawled for the public good, is master of all offices; and who, in order better to rob the money of the nation, buys members of the House of Commons with the same money. A prince is a practiser of all the vices, unable to employ or love an honest man, persuaded that 'the royal throne

[1] Swift's Works, xii. *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 2, ch. 6, p. 171.

could not be supported without corruption, because that positive, confident, restive temper, which virtue infused into a man, was a perpetual clog to public business.'[1] At Lilliput the king chooses as his ministers those who dance best upon the tight-rope. At Luggnagg he compels all those, who are presented to him, to crawl on their bellies and lick the dust.

'When the king has a mind to put any of his nobles to death in a gentle, indulgent manner, he commands the floor to be strewed with a certain brown powder of a deadly composition, which, being licked up, infallibly kills him in twenty-four hours. But in justice to this prince's great clemency, and the care he has of his subjects' lives (wherein it were much to be wished that the monarchs of Europe would imitate him), it must be mentioned for his honour, that strict orders are given to have the infected parts of the floor well washed after every such execution. . . . I myself heard him give directions that one of his pages should be whipped, whose turn it was to give notice about washing the floor after an execution, but maliciously had omitted it; by which neglect, a young lord of great hopes coming to an audience, was unfortunately poisoned, although the prince at that time had no design against his life. But this good prince was so gracious as to forgive the poor page his whipping, upon promise that he would do so no more, without special orders.'[2]

All these fictions of giants, pigmies, flying islands, are means for depriving human nature of the veils with which habit and imagination cover it, to display it in its truth and its ugliness. There is still one cloak to remove, the most deceitful and familiar. Swift must take away that appearance of reason in which we deck ourselves. He must suppress the sciences, arts, combinations of societies, inventions of industries, whose brightness dazzles us. He must discover the Yahoo in man. What a spectacle!

'At last I beheld several animals in a field, and one or two of the same kind sitting in trees. Their shape was very singular and deformed. . . . Their heads and breasts were covered with a thick hair, some frizzled, and others lank; they had beards like goats, and a long ridge of hair down their backs, and the forepart of their legs and feet; but the rest of their bodies was bare, so that I might see their skins, which were of a brown buff colour. . . . They climbed high trees as nimbly as a squirrel, for they had strong extended claws before and behind, terminating in sharp points and hooked. . . . The females . . . had long lank hair on their head, but none on their faces, nor anything more than a sort of down on the rest of their bodies. . . . Upon the whole I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so great an antipathy.'[3]

According to Swift, such are our brothers. He finds in them all our instincts. They hate each other, tear each other with their talons, with hideous contortions and yells: such is the source of our quarrels. If they find a dead cow, although they are but five, and there is enough for fifty, they strangle and wound each other: such is a picture of our

[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 3, ch. 8, p. 258.
[2] *Ibid.* Part 3, ch. 9, p. 264. [3] *Ibid.* Part 4, ch. 1, p. 286.

greed and our wars. They dig up precious stones and hide them in their kennels, and watch them 'with great caution,' pining and howling when robbed: such is the origin of our love of gold. They devour indifferently 'herbs, berries, roots, the corrupted flesh of animals,' preferring 'what they could get by rapine or stealth,' gorging themselves till they vomit or burst: such is the portrait of our gluttony and injustice. They have a kind of juicy and unwholesome root, which they 'would suck with great delight,' till they 'howl, and grin, and chatter,' embracing or scratching each other, then reeling, hiccuping, wallowing in the mud: such is a picture of our drunkenness.

'In most herds there was a sort of ruling yahoo, who was always more deformed in body, and mischievous in disposition, than any of the rest: that this leader had usually a favourite as like himself as he could get, whose employment was to lick his master's feet, . . . and drive the female yahoos to his kennel; for which he was now and then rewarded with a piece of ass's flesh. . . . He usually continues in office till a worse can be found.'[1]

Such is an abstract of our government. And yet he gives preference to the Yahoos over men, saying that our wretched reason has aggravated and multiplied these vices, and concluding with the king of Brobdignag that our species is 'the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'[2]

Five years after this treatise on man, he wrote in favour of unhappy Ireland a pamphlet which is like the last effort of his despair and his genius.[3] I give it almost whole; it deserves it. I know nothing like it in any literature:

'It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. . . . I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children . . . is, in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, easy members of the Commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation. . . . I shall now, therefore, humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.'[4]

When we know Swift, such a beginning frightens us:

'I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

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[1] *Gulliver's Travels*, Part 4, ch. 7, p. 337. [2] *Ibid.* Part 2, ch. 6, p. 172.

[3] *A Modest Proposal for preventing the children of the poor people in Ireland from becoming a burden on their parents or country, and for making them beneficial to the public.*

[4] *Ibid.* vii. 454.

'I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one-fourth part to be males; . . . that the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.'

'I have reckoned, upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh twelve pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, will increase to twenty-eight pounds.

'I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four-fifths of the farmers), to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat.

'Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require), may flay the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

'As to our city of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose in the most convenient parts of it; and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting; although I rather recommend buying the children alive, than dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs. . . .

'I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made, are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance. For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies. . . . Thirdly, whereas the maintenance of a hundred thousand children, from two years old and upward, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, beside the profit of a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture. . . . Sixthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care and tenderness of mothers toward their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public, to their annual profit or expense. . . . Many other advantages might be enumerated, for instance, the addition of some thousand carcases in our exportation of barrelled beef; the propagation of swine's flesh, and the improvement in the art of making good bacon. . . . But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

'Some persons of desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my thoughts, what course may be taken to ease the nation of so grievous an encumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter; because it is very well known, that they are every day dying and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition; they cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree, that, if at any

time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it; and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

'I profess, in the sincerity of my heart that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.'[1]

Much has been said of unhappy great men, Pascal, for instance. I think that his cries and his anguish are faint compared to this calm treatise.

Such was this great and unhappy genius, the greatest of the classical age, the most unhappy in history, English throughout, whom the excess of his English qualities inspired and consumed, having this intensity of desires, which is the main feature of the race, the enormity of pride which the habit of liberty, command, and success has impressed upon the nation, the solidity of the positive mind which the pursuit of business has established in the country; precluded from power and action by his unchecked passions and his intractable pride; excluded from poetry and philosophy by the clear-sightedness and narrowness of his common sense; deprived of the consolations offered by contemplative life, and the occupation furnished by practical life; too superior to embrace heartily a religious sect or a political party, too narrow-minded to rest in the lofty doctrines which conciliate all beliefs, or in the wide sympathies which envelop all parties; condemned by his nature and surroundings to fight without loving a cause, to write without being attached to the art, to think without attaining a dogma, a condottiere against parties, a misanthrope against man, a sceptic against beauty and truth. But these very surroundings, and this very nature, which expelled him from happiness, love, power, and science, raised him, in this age of French imitation and classical moderation, to a wonderful height, where, by the originality and power of his inventions, he is the equal of Byron, Milton, and Shakspeare, and shows pre-eminently the spirit of his nation. Sensibility, a positive mind, and pride, forged for him a unique style, of terrible vehemence, withering calmness, practical effectiveness, tempered with scorn, truth, and hatred, a weapon of vengeance and war which made his enemies cry out and die under its point and its poison. A pamphleteer against opposition and government, he tore or crushed his adversaries with his irony or his sentences, with the tone of a judge, a sovereign, and a hangman. A man of the world and a poet, he invented a cruel pleasantry, funereal laughter, a convulsive gaiety of bitter contrasts; and whilst dragging the mythological harness, as if it were a compulsory rag, he created a personal poetry by painting the crude details of trivial life, by the energy of a painful grotesqueness, by

[1] *A Modest Proposal*, etc., 457.

the merciless revelation of the filth we conceal. A philosopher against all philosophy, he created a realistic poem, a grave parody, deduced like geometry, absurd as a dream, credible as a law report, attractive as a tale, degrading as a dishclout set like a crown on the head of a divinity. These were his miseries and his force: we quit such a spectacle with a sad heart, but full of admiration; and we say that a palace is beautiful even when it is on fire. Artists will add: especially when it is on fire.

CHAPTER VI.

The Novelists.

I. Characteristic of the English novel—How it differs from others.

II. De Foe—His life—Energy, devotion, his part in politics—Spirit—Difference of old and modern realists — Works — Career — Aim — *Robinson Crusoe*—How this character is English — Inner enthusiasm—Obstinate will—Patience in work—Methodical common sense—Religious emotions—Final piety.

III. Circumstances which gave rise to the novels of the eighteenth century—All these novels are moral fictions and studies of character—Connexion of the essay and the novel—Two principal notions in morality—How they produce two kinds of novels.

IV. Richardson—Condition and character—Connexion of his perspicacity and his rigour — Talent, minuteness, combinations — *Pamela* — Her mood —Principles—The English wife—*Clarissa Harlowe*—The Harlowe family —Despotic and unsociable characteristics in England—Clarissa—Her energy, coolness, logic—Her pedantry and scruples—*Sir Charles Grandison*—Incongruities of automatic and edifying heroes—Richardson as a preacher—Prolixity, prudery, emphasis.

V. Fielding—Mood, character, and life—*Joseph Andrews*—His conception of nature—*Tom Jones*—Character of the squire—Fielding's heroes—*Amelia*—Faults in her conception.

VI. Smollett—*Roderick Random*—*Peregrine Pickle*—Comparison of Smollett and Lesage—Conception of life—Harshness of his heroes—Coarseness of his pictures—Standing out of his characters—*Humphrey Clinker*.

VII. Sterne—Excessive study of human particularities — Sterne's character—Eccentricity—Sensibility—Obscenity—Why he depicts the diseases and degeneracies of humanity.

VIII. Goldsmith—Purification of the novel—Picture of citizen life, upright happiness, Protestant virtue—*The Vicar of Wakefield*—The English clergyman.

IX. Samuel Johnson—His authority—Person—Manners—Life—Doctrines—Opinion of Voltaire and Rousseau—Style—Works—Hogarth—Moral and realistic painting—Contrast of English temperament and morality—How morality has disciplined temperament.

I.

AMIDST these finished and perfect writings a new kind makes its appearance, appropriate to the public tendencies and circumstances, the anti-romantic novel, the work and the reading of positive minds, observers and moralists, destined not to exalt and amuse the

imagination, like the novels of Spain and the middle ages, not to reproduce or embellish conversation, like the novels of France and the seventeenth century, but to depict real life, to describe characters, to suggest plans of conduct, and judge motives of action. It was a strange apparition, and like the voice of a people buried underground, when, amidst the splendid corruption of high life, this severe emanation of the middle class welled up, and when the obscenities of Mrs. Aphra Behn, still the diversion of ladies of fashion, were found on the same table with De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

II.

De Foe, a dissenter, a pamphleteer, a journalist, a novel-writer, successively a hosier, a tile-maker, an accountant, was one of those indefatigable labourers and obstinate combatants, who, ill-treated, calumniated, imprisoned, succeeded by their uprightness, common sense, and energy, in gaining England over to their side. At twenty-three, having taken arms for Monmouth, he was fortunate in not being hung or transported. Seven years later he was ruined, and obliged to hide. In 1702, for a pamphlet misunderstood, he was condemned to pay a fine, was set in the pillory, had his ears cut off, was imprisoned two years in Newgate, and only the charity of Godolphin prevented his wife and six children from dying of hunger. Being released and sent as a commissioner to Scotland, to treat about the union of the two countries, he had a narrow escape of being stoned. Another pamphlet, again misconceived, sent him to prison, compelled him to pay a fine of eight hundred pounds, and only just in time he received the queen's pardon. He was caricatured, robbed, and slandered. He was obliged to protest against the plagiarists who borrowed and altered his works for their benefit; against the neglect of the Whigs, who did not find him tractable enough; against the animosity of the Tories, who saw in him the chief champion of the Whigs. In the midst of his self-defence he was struck with apoplexy, and continued to defend himself from his bed. Yet he lived, but with great difficulty; poor and burdened with a family, he turned, at fifty-five, to fiction, and wrote successively *Moll Flanders*, *Captain Singleton*, *Duncan Campbell*, *Colonel Jack*, the *History of the Great Plague in London*, etc. This vein exhausted, he diverged and tried another—the *Complete English Tradesman*, *a Tour through Great Britain*. Death comes on; poverty remains. In vain had he written in prose, in verse, on all subjects, political and religious, accidental or moral, satires and novels, histories and poems, travels and pamphlets, commercial essays and statistical information, in all two hundred and ten works, not of verbiage, but of arguments, documents, and facts, crowded and piled one upon another with such prodigality, that the memory, thought, and application of one man seem too small for such a labour; he died penniless, in debt. However we regard his life, we see only prolonged efforts and persecutions. Joy seems to be

wanting; the idea of the beautiful never enters. When he comes to fiction, it is like a Presbyterian and a plebeian, with low subjects and moral aims, to treat of the adventures and reform the conduct of thieves and prostitutes, workmen and sailors. His whole delight was to think that he had a service to perform, and that he was performing it:

'He that opposes his own judgment against the current of the times ought to be backed with unanswerable truth; and he that has truth on his side, is a fool as well as a coward, if he is afraid to own it, because of the multitude of other men's opinions. 'Tis hard for a man to say, all the world is mistaken, but himself. But if it be so, who can help it?'

De Foe is like one of those brave, obscure, and useful soldiers who, with empty belly and burdened shoulders, go through their duties with their feet in the mud, pocket blows, receive day by day the fire of the enemy, and sometimes that of their friends into the bargain, and die sergeants, happy if it has been their lot to get hold of the legion of honour.

He had the kind of mind suitable to such a hard service, solid, exact, entirely destitute of refinement, enthusiasm, pleasantness.[1] His imagination was that of a man of business, not of an artist, crammed and, as it were, jammed down with facts. He tells them as they come to him, without arrangement or style, like a conversation, without dreaming of producing an effect or composing a phrase, employing technical terms and vulgar forms, repeating himself at need, using the same thing two or three times, not seeming to suspect that there are methods of amusing, touching, engrossing, or pleasing, with no desire but to pour out on paper the fulness of the information with which he is charged. Even in fiction his information is as precise as in history. He gives dates, year, month, and day; notes the wind, north-east, south-west, north-west; he writes a log-book, an invoice, attorneys' and shopkeepers' bills, the number of moidores, interest, specie payments, payments in kind, cost and sale prices, the share of the king, of religious houses, partners, brokers, net totals, statistics, the geography and hydrography of the island, so that the reader is tempted to take an atlas and draw for himself a little map of the place, to enter into all the details of the history as clearly and fully as the author. It seems as though he had performed all Crusoe's labours, so exactly does he describe them, with numbers, quantities, dimensions, like a carpenter, potter, or an old tar. Never was such a sense of the real before or since. Our realists of to-day, painters, anatomists, decidedly men of business, are very far from this naturalness; art and calculation crop out amidst their too minute descriptions. De Foe creates illusion; for it is not the eye which deceives us, but the

[1] See his dull poems, amongst others *Jure Divino*, a poem in twelve books, in defence of every man's birthright by nature.

mind, and that literally: his account of the great plague has more than once passed for true; and Lord Chatham took his *Memoirs of a Cavalier* for authentic. This was his aim. In the preface to the old edition of *Robinson Crusoe* it is said:

'The story is told . . . to the instruction of others by this example, and to justify and honour the wisdom of Providence. The editor believes the thing to be a just history of facts; neither is there any appearance of fiction in it.'

All his talents lie in this, and thus even his imperfections aid him; his lack of art becomes a profound art; his negligence, repetitions, prolixity, contribute to the illusion: we cannot imagine that such and such a detail, so minute, so dull, is invented; an inventor would have suppressed it; it is too tedious to have been put in on purpose: art chooses, embellishes, interests; art, therefore, cannot have piled up this heap of dull and vulgar accidents; it is the truth.

Read, for instance, *A True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal, the next Day after her Death, to one Mrs Bargrave, at Canterbury, the 8th of September* 1705; *which Apparition recommends the perusal of Drelincourt's Book of Consolation against the Fear of Death.*[1] The ancient threepenny little books, read by old needlewomen, are not more monotonous. There is such an array of circumstantial and guaranteed details, such a file of witnesses quoted, referred to, registered, compared, such a perfect appearance of tradesman-like honesty, coarse, vulgar common sense, that one would take the author for an honest retired hosier, with too little brains to invent a story; no writer careful of his reputation would have composed such nonsense. In fact, it was not his reputation that De Foe cared for; he had other motives in his head; we literary men of the present time cannot guess them, being literary men only. In short, he wanted to sell a pious book of Drelincourt, which would not sell of itself, and in addition, to confirm people in their belief by advocating the appearance of ghosts. It was the grand proof then brought to bear on sceptics. Grave Dr. Johnson himself tried to see a ghost, and no event of that time was more appropriate to the belief of the middle class. Here, as elsewhere, De Foe, like Swift, is a man of action; effect, not noise touches him; he composed *Robinson Crusoe* to warn the impious, as Swift wrote the life of the last man hung to inspire thieves with terror. In this positive and religious age, amidst these political and puritan citizens, practice is of such importance as to reduce art to the condition of its tool.

Never was art the tool of a more moral or more English work. Crusoe is quite one of his race, and might instruct it in the present day. He has that force of will, inner enthusiasm, dull ferment of a violent examination which formerly produced the sea-kings, and now produces emigrants and squatters. The misfortunes of his two brothers, the

[1] Compare Edgar Poe's *Case of M. Waldemar*. The American is a suffering artist; De Foe a sensible citizen.

tears of his relatives, the advice of his friends, the remonstrances of his reason, the remorse of his conscience, are all unable to restrain him: there was 'a something fatal in his nature;' he had conceived the idea, he must go to sea. To no purpose is he seized with repentance during the first storm; he drowns in punch these 'fits' of conscience. To no purpose is he warned by shipwreck and a narrow escape from death; he is hardened, and grows obstinate. To no purpose captivity among the Moors and the possession of a fruitful plantation invite repose; the indomitable instinct returns; he was born to be his own destroyer, and embarks again. The ship goes down; he is cast alone on a desert island; then his native energy found its vent and its employment; like his descendants, the pioneers of Australia and America, he must re-create and re-master one by one the inventions and acquisitions of human industry; one by one he does so. Nothing represses his effort; neither possession nor weariness:

'I had the biggest magazine of all kinds now that ever was laid up, I believe, for one man; but I was not satisfied still; for, while the ship sat upright in that posture, I thought I ought to get everything out of her that I could. . . . I got most of the pieces of cable ashore, and some of the iron, though with infinite labour; for I was fain to dip for it into the water; a work which fatigued me very much. . . . I believe, verily, had the calm weather held, I should have brought away the whole ship, piece by piece.'[1]

In his eyes, work is natural. When, in order 'to barricade himself, he goes to cut the piles in the woods, and drives them into the earth, which cost a great deal of time and labour,' he says:

'A very laborious and tedious work. But what need I have been concerned at the tediousness of any thing I had to do, seeing I had time enough to do it in? . . . My time or labour was little worth, and so it was as well employed one way as another.'[2]

Application and fatigue of head and arms give occupation to his superfluous activity and force; the mill must find grist to grind, without which, turning round empty, it would consume itself. He works, therefore, all day and night, at once carpenter, oarsman, porter, hunter, tiller of the ground, potter, tailor, milkman, basketmaker, grinder, baker, invincible in difficulties, disappointments, expenditure of time and toil. Having but a hatchet and an adze, it took him forty-two days to make a board. He occupied two months in making his first two jars; five months in making his first boat; then, 'by dint of hard labour,' he levelled the ground from his timber-yard to the sea, tried to bring the sea up to his boat, and began to dig a canal; then, reckoning that he would require ten or twelve years to finish the task, he builds another boat at another place, with another canal half a mile long, four feet deep, six wide. He spends two years over it:

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[1] De Foe's Works, 20 vols., 1819-21. *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, i. ch. iv. 65.

[2] *Ibid.* 76.

'I bore with this. . . . I went through that by dint of hard labour. . . . Many weary stroke it had cost. . . . This will testify that I was not idle. . . . As I had learned not to despair of any thing. I never grudged my labour.'

These strong expressions of indomitable patience are ever recurring. This hard race is framed for labour, as its sheep are for slaughter and its horses for the chase. Even now you may hear their mighty hatchet and pickaxe strokes in the claims of Melbourne and in the log-houses of the Salt Lake. The reason of their success is the same there as here; they do everything with calculation and method; they rationalise their energy, which is like a torrent they make a canal for. Crusoe sets to work only after deliberate calculation and reflection. When he seeks a spot for his tent, he enumerates the four conditions of the place he requires. When he wishes to escape despair, he draws up impartially, 'like debtor and creditor,' the list of his advantages and disadvantages, putting them in two columns, active and passive, item for item, so that the balance is in his favour. His courage is only the servant of his common sense:

'By stating and squaring everything by reason, and by making the most rational judgment of things, every man may be in time master of every mechanic art. I had never handled a tool in my life, and yet in time, by labour, application, and contrivance, I found at last that I wanted nothing but I could have made it, especially if I had had tools.'[1]

There is a grave and deep pleasure in this painful success, and in this personal acquisition. The squatter, like Crusoe, takes pleasure in things, not only because they are useful, but because they are his work. He feels himself a man, whilst finding all about him the sign of his labour and thought; he is pleased:

'I had everything so ready at my hand, that it was a great pleasure to me to see all my goods in such order, and especially to find my stock of all necessaries so great.'[2]

He returns to his home willingly, because he is there a master and creator of all the comforts he has around him; he takes his meals there gravely and 'like a king.'

Such are the pleasures of home. A guest enters there to fortify these natural inclinations by the ascendency of duty. Religion appears, as it must, in emotions and visions: for this is not a calm soul; imagination breaks out into it at the least shock, and carries it to the threshold of madness. On the day when he saw the 'print of a naked man's foot on the shore,' he stood 'like one thunderstruck,' and fled 'like a hare to cover;' his ideas are in a whirl, he is no longer master of them; though he is hidden and barricaded, he thinks himself discovered; he intends 'to throw down the enclosures, turn all the tame cattle wild into the woods, dig up the corn-fields.' He has all kind of fancies; he asks himself if it is not the devil who has left this footmark; and reasons upon it:

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[1] *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. iv. 79. [2] *Ibid.* 80.

'I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other ways to have terrified me; . . . that, as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand too, which the first surge of the sea upon a high wind would have defaced entirely. All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all notions we usually entertain of the subtlety of the devil.'[1]

In this impassioned and uncultivated mind, which for eight years had continued without a thought, and as it were stupid, engrossed in manual labour and bodily wants, belief took root, fostered by anxiety and solitude. Amidst the risks of all-powerful nature, in this great uncertain upheaving, a Frenchman, a man bred like us, would cross his arms gloomily like a Stoic, or would wait like an epicure for the return of physical cheerfulness. As for Crusoe, at the sight of the ears of barley which have suddenly made their appearance, he weeps, and thinks at first 'that God had miraculously caused this grain to grow.' Another day he has a terrible vision: in a fever he repents of his sins; he opens the Bible, and finds these words, which 'were very apt to his case:' 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'[2] Prayer then rises to his lips, true prayer, the converse of the heart with a God who answers, and to whom we listen. He also read the words: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'[3]

'Immediately it occurred that these words were to me. Why else should they be directed in such a manner, just at the moment when I was mourning over my condition, as one forsaken of God and man?'[4]

Thenceforth spiritual life begins for him. To reach its very foundation, the squatter needs only his Bible; with it he carries out his faith, his theology, his worship; every evening he finds in it some application to his present condition: he is not alone; God speaks to him, and provides for his energy matter for a second labour to sustain and complete the first. For he now undertakes against his heart the combat which he has maintained against nature; he wants to conquer, transform, ameliorate, pacify the one as he has done with the other. Crusoe fasts, observes the Sabbath, three times a day he reads the Scripture, and says:

'I gave humble and hearty thanks . . . that he (God) could fully make up to me the deficiencies of my solitary state, and the want of human society by his presence, and the communication of his grace to my soul, supporting, comforting, and encouraging me to depend upon his providence, and hope for his eternal presence hereafter.'[5]

In this disposition of mind there is nothing a man cannot endure or do; heart and hand come to the assistance of the arms; religion consecrates labour, piety feeds patience; and man, supported on one side by his instincts, on the other by his beliefs, finds himself able to clear the land, to people, to organise and civilise continents.

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[1] *Robinson Crusoe*, ch. xi. 184. [2] *Ibid.* 187. Ps. l. 15. [3] Heb. xiii. 5.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. viii. 134. [5] *Ibid.* ch. viii. 133.

III.

It was by chance that De Foe, like Cervantes, lighted on a novel of character: as a rule, like Cervantes, he only wrote novels of adventure; he knew life better than the soul, and the general course of the world better than the particularities of the individual. But the impulse was given, nevertheless, and now the rest followed. Chivalrous manners had been blotted out, carrying with them the poetical and picturesque drama. Monarchical manners had been blotted out, carrying with them the witty and licentious drama. Citizen manners had been established, bringing with them domestic and practical reading. Like society, literature changed its course. Books were needed to read by the fireside, in the country, in the family: invention and genius turn to this kind of writing. The sap of human thought, abandoning the old dried-up branches, flowed into the unseen boughs, which it suddenly made to grow and turn green, and the fruits which it produced bear witness at once to the surrounding temperature and the native stock. Two features are common and proper to them. All these novels are character novels. The men of this country, more reflective than others, more inclined to the melancholy pleasure of concentrated attention and inner examination, find around them human medals more vigorously struck, less worn by friction with the world, whose uninjured face is more visible than that of others. All these novels are works of observation, and spring from a moral design. The men of this time, having fallen away from lofty imagination, and being immersed in active life, desire to cull from books a solid instruction, exact documents, effectual emotions, feelings of practical admiration, and motives of action.

We have but to look around; the same inclination begins on all sides the same task. The novel springs up everywhere, and shows the same spirit under all forms. At this time[1] appear the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, *Guardian*, and all those agreeable and serious essays which, like the novel, look for readers at home, to supply them with documents and provide them with counsels; which, like the novel, describe manners, paint characters, and try to correct the public; which, in fine, like the novel, turn spontaneously to fiction and portraiture. Addison, like a delicate amateur of moral curiosities, complacently follows the amiable oddities of Sir Roger de Coverley, smiles, and with discreet hand guides the excellent knight through all the awkward predicaments which may bring out his rural prejudices and his innate generosity; whilst by his side the unhappy Swift, degrading man to the instincts of the beast of prey and beast of burden, tortures humanity by forcing it to recognise itself under the execrable portrait of the Yahoo. Although they differ, both authors are working at the same task. They only employ imagination in order to study characters, and to suggest plans of conduct. They bring

[1] 1709, 1711, 1713.

down philosophy to observation and application. They only dream of reforming or chastising vice. They are only moralists and psychologists. They both confine themselves to the consideration of vice and virtue; one with calm benevolence, the other with savage indignation. The same point of view produces the graceful portraits of Addison and the frightful pictures of Swift. Their successors do the like, and all diversities of mood and talent do not hinder their works from acknowledging a single source, and concurring in a single effect.

Two principal ideas can rule, and have ruled, morality in England. Now it is conscience which is accepted as a sovereign; now it is instinct which is taken for guide. Now they have recourse to grace; now they rely on nature. Now they wholly enslave everything to rule; now they give everything up to liberty. The two opinions have successively reigned in England; and the human frame, at once too vigorous and too unyielding, successively justifies their ruin and their success. Some, alarmed by the fire of an over-fed temperament, and by the energy of unsocial passions, have regarded nature as a dangerous beast, and placed conscience with all its auxiliaries, religion, law, education, proprieties, as so many armed sentinels to repress its least outbreaks. Others, repelled by the harshness of an incessant constraint, and by the minuteness of a morose discipline, have overturned guards and barriers, and let loose captive nature to enjoy the free air and sun, deprived of which it was being choked. Both by their excesses have deserved their defeats and raised up their adversaries. From Shakspeare to the Puritans, from Milton to Wycherley, from Congreve to De Foe, from Wilberforce to Lord Byron, unruliness has provoked constraint and tyranny revolt. This great contest of rule and nature is developed again in the writings of Fielding and Richardson.

IV.

'*Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, in a series of familiar letters from a beautiful young damsel to her parents, published in order to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion in the minds of the youth of both sexes; a narrative which has its foundation in truth, and at the same time that it agreeably entertains by a variety of curious and affecting incidents, is entirely divested of all those images which, in too many pieces calculated for amusement only, tend to inflame the minds they should instruct.'[1] We can make no mistake, the title is clear. The preachers rejoiced to see assistance coming to them from the very spot where there was danger; and Dr. Sherlock, from his pulpit, recommended the book. Men inquired about the author. He was a printer and bookseller, a joiner's son, who, at the age of fifty, and in his leisure moments, wrote in his shop parlour: a laborious man, who, by work and good conduct, had raised himself to a competency and sound informa-

[1] 1741. The translator has consulted the tenth edition, 1775, 4 vols.

tion; delicate, moreover gentle, nervous, often ill, with a taste for the society of women, accustomed to correspond for and with them, of reserved and retired habits, whose only fault was a timid vanity. He was severe in principles, and had acquired perspicacity by his rigour. In fact, conscience is a lamp; a moralist is a psychologist; Christian casuistry is a sort of natural history of the soul. He who through anxiety of conscience busies himself in drawing out the good or evil motives of his manifest actions, who sees vices and virtues at their birth, who follows the insensible progress of culpable thoughts, and the secret confirmation of good resolves, who can mark the force, nature, and moment of temptations and resistances, holds in his hand almost all the moving strings of humanity, and has only to make them vibrate regularly to draw from them the most powerful harmonies. In this consists the art of Richardson; he combines whilst he observes; his meditation develops the ideas of the moralist. No one in this age has equalled him in these detailed and comprehensive conceptions, which, grouping to a single end the passions of thirty characters, twine and colour the innumerable threads of the whole canvas, to bring out a figure, an action, or a lesson.

This first novel is a flower—one of those flowers which only bloom in a virgin imagination, at the dawn of original invention, whose charm and freshness surpass all that the maturity of art and genius can afterwards cultivate or arrange. Pamela is a child of fifteen, brought up by an old lady, half servant and half favourite, who, after the death of her mistress, finds herself exposed to the growing seductions and persecutions of the young master of the house. She is a genuine child, frank and artless as Goethe's Margaret, and of the same family. After twenty pages, we involuntarily see this fresh rosy face, always blushing, and her laughing eyes, so ready with tears. At the smallest kindness she is confused; she knows not what to say; she changes colour, casts down her eyes, as she makes a curtsey; the poor innocent heart is troubled or melts.[1] No trace of the bold vivacity, the nervous coolness, which are the elements of a French girl. She is 'a lambkin,' loved, loving, without pride, vanity, bitterness; timid, always humble. When her master tries forcibly to kiss her, she is astonished; she will not believe that the world is so wicked. 'This gentleman has degraded himself to offer freedoms to his poor servant.'[2] She is afraid of being too free with him; reproaches herself, when she writes to her relatives, with saying too often *he* and *him* instead of his honour; 'but it is his fault if I do, for why did he lose all his dignity with me?'[3] No outrage exhausts

[1] 'To be sure I did think nothing but curt'sy and cry, and was all in confusion at his goodness.

'I was so confounded at these words, you might have beat me down with a feather. . . . So, like a fool, I was ready to cry, and went away curt'sying, and blushing, I am sure up to the ears.'

[2] Vol. i. Letter x. [3] *Ibid.*

her submissiveness: he has embraced her, and took hold of her arm so rudely that it was 'black and blue;' he has done worse, he has behaved like a ruffian and a knave. To cap all, he slanders her circumstantially before the servants; he insults her repeatedly, and provokes her to speak; she does not speak, will not fail in her duty to her master. 'It is for you, sir, to say what you please, and for me only to say, God bless your honour!'[1] She falls on her knees, and thanks him for sending her away. But in so much submission what resistance! All is against her; he is her master; he is a justice of the peace, secure against all intervention—a sort of divinity to her, with all the superiority and authority of a feudal prince. Moreover, he has the brutality of the times; he rates her, speaks to her like a slave, and yet thinks himself very kind. He shuts her up alone for several months, with 'a wicked creature,' his housekeeper, who beats and threatens her. He attacks her by fear, weariness, surprise, money, gentleness. At last, what is more terrible, her own heart is against her: she loves him secretly; her virtues injure her; she dare not lie, when she most needs it;[2] and piety keeps her from suicide, when that seems her only resource. One by one the issues close around her, so that she loses hope, and the readers of her adventures think her lost and ruined. But this native innocence has been strengthened by Puritanic faith. She sees temptations in her weaknesses; she knows that 'Lucifer always is ready to promote his own work and workmen;'[3] she is penetrated by the great Christian idea, which makes all souls equal before the common salvation and the final judgment. She says: 'My soul is of equal importance to the soul of a princess, though my quality is inferior to that of the meanest slave.'[4] Wounded, stricken, abandoned, betrayed, still the knowledge and thought of a happy or an unhappy eternity are two defences which no assault can carry. She knows it well; she has no other means of explaining vice than to suppose them absent. She considers that wicked Mrs. Jewkes is an atheist. Belief in God, the heart's belief—not the wording of the catechism, but the inner feeling, the habit of picturing justice as ever living and ever present—this is the fresh blood which the Reformation caused to enter the veins of the old world, and which alone could give it a new life and a new youth.

She is, as it were, animated by it; in the most perilous as in the sweetest moments, this grand sentiment returns to her, so much is it entwined with all the rest, so much has it multiplied its tendrils and buried its roots in the innermost folds of her heart. Her young master thinks of marrying her now, and wishes to be sure that she loves him. She dares not say so, being afraid to give him a hold upon her. She

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[1] *Pamela*, i. Letter xxvii.
[2] 'I dare not tell a wilful lie.'
[3] *Pamela*, i. Letter xxv.
[4] *Ibid.* Letter to Mr. Williams, i. 208.

is greatly troubled by his kindness, and yet she must answer. Religion comes to veil love in a sublime half-confession:

'I fear not, sir, the grace of God supporting me, that any acts of kindness would make me forget what I owe to my virtue; but . . . my nature is too frank and open to make me wish to be ungrateful; and if I should be taught a lesson I never yet learnt, with what regret should I descend to the grave, to think that I could not hate my undoer: and that, at the last great day, I must stand up as an accuser of the poor unhappy soul, that I could wish it in my power to save!'[1]

He is softened and vanquished, descends from that vast height where aristocratic customs had placed him, and thenceforth, day by day, the letters of the happy child record the preparations for their marriage. Amidst this triumph and happiness she continues humble, devoted, and tender; her heart is full, and gratitude fills it from every source: 'This foolish girl must be, after twelve o'clock this day, as much his wife as if he were to marry a duchess.'[2] She 'had the boldness to kiss his hand.'[3] 'My heart is so wholly yours, that I am afraid of nothing but that I may be forwarder than you wish.'[4] Shall the marriage take place Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday? She dare not say Yes; she blushes and trembles: there is a delightful charm in this timid modesty, these restrained effusions. For a wedding present she obtains the pardon of the wicked creatures who have ill-treated her: 'I clasped my arms about his neck, and was not ashamed to kiss him once, and twice, and three times, once for each forgiven person.'[5] Then they talk over their plans: she shall remain at the lodge; she will not frequent grand parties; she is not fond of cards; she will keep the 'family accounts,' and distribute her husband's charities; she will help the housekeeper in 'the making jellies, comfits, sweetmeats, marmalades, cordials, and to pot, and candy, and preserve,'[6] to get up the linen; she will look after the breakfast and dinner, especially when there are guests; she knows how to carve: she will wait for her husband, who perhaps will be so good as now and then to give her an hour or two of his 'agreeable conversation,' 'and will be indulgent to the impertinent overflowings of my grateful heart.'[7] In his absence she will read—'that will help to polish my mind, and make me worthier of your company and conversation;'[8] and she will pray to God, she says, in order 'that I may be enabled to discharge my duty to'[9] her husband. Richardson has sketched here the portrait of the English wife—a good housekeeper and sedentary, studious and obedient, loving and pious—and Fielding will finish it in his *Amelia*.

This was a contest: here is one still greater. Virtue, like force of every kind, is valued according to its power of resistance: and we have only to subject it to more violent tests, to give it its greatest

[1] *Pamela*, i. 290. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 167. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 78. [4] *Ibid.* ii. 148.
[5] *Ibid.* ii. 194. [6] *Ibid.* ii. 62. [7] *Ibid.* [8] *Ibid.* ii. 63.
[9] *Ibid.*

prominence. Let us look in the passions of her native land for foes capable of assailing virtue, calling it forth, and rendering it obstinate. The evil and the good of the English character is a too strong will.[1] When tenderness and lofty reason fail, the native energy is turned to sternness, obstinacy, inflexible tyranny, and the heart becomes a den of malevolent passions, eager to rave and tear each other. Against a family, having such passions, Clarissa Harlowe has to struggle. Her father never would be 'controuled, nor yet persuaded.'[2] He never 'did give up one point he thought he had a right to carry.'[3] He has broken down the will of his wife, and degraded her to the part of a dumb servant; he wishes to break down the will of his daughter, and give her for a husband a coarse and heartless fool. He is the head of the family, master of all his people, despotic and ambitious as a Roman patrician, and he wishes to found a house. He is stern in these two harsh resolves, and thunders against the rebellious daughter. Above the outbursts of his voice we hear the loud wrath of his son, a sort of hot-blooded, over-fed bull-dog, excited by his greed, his youth, his fiery temper, and his premature authority; the shrill outcry of the eldest daughter, a coarse, plain-looking girl, with 'a plump, high-fed face,' exactingly jealous, prone to hate, who, being neglected by Lovelace, revenges herself on her beautiful sister; the churlish growling of the two uncles, narrow-minded old bachelors, vulgar, pig-headed, through their notions of male authority; the grievous importunities of the mother, the aunt, the old nurse, poor timid slaves, reduced one by one to become instruments of persecution. The whole family have bound themselves to favour Mr. Solmes' proposal to marry Clarissa. They do not reason, they simply express their will. By dint of repetition, only one idea has fixed itself in their brain, and they become furious when any one endeavours to free them from it. 'Who at the long run must submit?' asks her mother; 'all of us to you, or you to all of us?'[4] Clarissa offers every submission; she consents to give up her property. But her family answered: 'They had a right to her obedience upon their own terms; her proposal was an artifice, only to gain time; nothing but marrying Mr. Solmes should do; . . . they should not be at rest till it was done.'[5] It must be done, they have promised it; it is a point of honour with them. A girl, a young, inexperienced, insignificant girl, to resist men, old men, of position and consideration, nay, her whole family—monstrous! So they persist, like brutes as they are, blindly putting on the screw with all their stupid hands together, not seeing that at every turn they bring the child nearer to madness, dishonour, or death. She begs them, implores them, one by one, with

[1] See in *Pamela* the characters of Squire B. and Lady Davers.
[2] *Clarissa Harlowe*, 4th ed. 1751, 7 vols. i. 92.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 105.
[4] *Ibid.* i. Letter xx. 125.
[5] *Ibid.* i. Letter xxxix. 253.

every argument and prayer; racks herself to discover concessions, goes on her knees, faints, makes them weep. It is all useless. The indomitable, crushing will oppresses her with its daily increasing mass. There is no example of such a varied moral torture, so incessant, so obstinate. They persist in it, as if it were a task, and are vexed to find that she makes her task so long. They refuse to see her, forbid her to write, are afraid of her tears. Her sister Arabella, with the venomous bitterness of an offended, ugly woman, tries to make her insults more stinging:

'The *witty*, the *prudent*, nay the *dutiful* and pi-ous (so she sneeringly pronounced the word) Clarisse Harlowe, should be so strangely fond of a profligate man, that her parents were forced to lock her up, in order to hinder her from running into his arms. "Let me ask you, my dear, said she, how you now keep your account of the disposition of your time? How many hours in the twenty-four do you devote to your needle? How many to your prayers? How many to letter-writing? And how many to love? I doubt, I doubt, my little dear, the latter article is like Aaron's rod, and swallows up the rest. . . . You must therefore bend or break, that was all, child.[1] . . .

'"What, not speak yet? Come, my sullen, silent dear, speak one word to me. You must say *two* very soon to Mr. Solmes, I can tell you that. . . . Well, well (insultingly wiping my averted face with her handkerchief) . . . Then you think you may be brought to speak the two words."'[2]

She continues thus:

'*This*, Clary, is a pretty pattern enough. But *this* is quite charming!—And *this*, were I you, should be my wedding nightgown.—But, Clary, won't you have a velvet suit? It would cut a great figure in a country church, you know. Crimson velvet, I suppose. Such a fine complexion as yours, how would it be set off by it!—And do you sigh, love? Black velvet, so fair as you are, with those charming eyes, gleaming, through a wintry cloud, like an April sun. Does not Lovelace tell you they are charming eyes?'[3]

Then, when Arabella is reminded that, three months ago, she did not find Lovelace so worthy of scorn, she nearly chokes with passion; she wants to beat her sister, cannot speak, and says to her aunt, 'with great violence:' 'Let us go, madam; let us leave the creature to swell till she bursts with her own poison.'[4] It reminds us of a pack of hounds in full cry after a deer, which is caught, and wounded; whilst the pack grow more eager and more ferocious, because they have tasted his blood.

At the last moment, when she thinks to escape them, a new chase begins, more dangerous than the other. Lovelace has all the evil passions of Harlowe, and in addition a genius which sharpens and aggravates them. What a character! How English! how different from the Don Juan of Mozart or of Molière! Before everything the cruel fair one, the desire to bend others, a combative spirit, a craving

[1] *Clarissa Harlowe*, i. Letter xlii. 278.
[2] *Ibid.* i. Letter xliii. 295.
[3] *Ibid.* i. Letter xlv. 308.
[4] *Ibid.* 309.

for triumph; only after these come the senses. He spares an innocent girl because he knows she is easy to conquer, and the grandmother 'has besought him to be merciful to her.' 'The *Debellare superbos* should be my motto,'[1] he writes to his friend Belford; and in another letter he says: 'I always considered opposition and resistance as a challenge to do my worst.'[2] At bottom, pride, infinite, insatiable, senseless, is the mainspring, the only motive of all his actions. He acknowledges 'that he only wanted Cæsar's outsetting to make a figure among his cotemporaries,'[3] and that he only stoops to private conquests out of mere whim. He declares that he would not marry the first princess on earth, if he but thought she balanced a minute in her choice of him or of an emperor. He is held to be gay, brilliant, conversational; but this petulance of animal vigour is only external: he is cruel, jests savagely, in cool blood, like a hangman, about the harm which he has done or means to do. Mark in what manner he reassures a poor servant who is troubled at having given up Clarissa to him. 'The affair of Miss Betterton was a youthful frolick. . . . I went into mourning for her, though abroad at the time. A distinction I have ever paid to those worthy creatures who died in childbed by me. . . . Why this squeamishness, then, honest Joseph?'[4] At that time, and in this land, the roysterers of those days threw the human body in the sewers. One gentleman, a friend of Lovelace, 'tricked a farmer's daughter, a pretty girl, up to town, . . . drank her light-hearted, . . . then to the play, . . . then to the bagnio, ruined her; kept her on a fortnight or three weeks; then left her to the mercy of the people of the bagnio (never paying for anything), who stript her of all her cloaths, and because she would not take on, threw her into prison, where she died in want and in despair.'[5] The rakes in France were only rascals,[6] here they were villains; wickedness with them poisoned love. Lovelace hates Clarissa even more than he loves her. He has a book in which he sets down, he says, 'all the family faults and the infinite trouble she herself has given me. When my heart is soft, and all her own, I can but turn to my memoranda, and harden myself at once.'[7] He is angry because she dares to defend herself, says that he'll teach her to vie with him in inventions, to make plots against and for her conqueror. It is a struggle between them, without truce or halting. Lovelace says of himself: 'What an industrious spirit have I! Nobody can say that I eat the bread of idleness; . . . certainly, with this active soul, I should have made a very great figure in whatever station I had filled.'[8] He assaults and besieges her, spends

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[1] *Clarissa Harlowe*, i. Letter xxxiv. 223.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. Letter xliii. 315.
[3] *Ibid.* i. Letter xii. 65.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. Letter xviii. 89.
[5] *Ibid.* vii. Letter xxxviii. 122.
[6] See the *Mémoires* of the Marshal de Richelieu.
[7] *Clarissa Harlowe*, ii. Letter xxxix. 294.
[8] *Ibid.* iv. xxxiii. 232.

whole nights outside her house, gives the Harlowes servants of his own, invents stories, introduces imaginary personages, forges letters. There is no expense, fatigue, plot, disloyalty which he will not undertake. All weapons are the same to him. He digs and plans even when away, ten, twenty, fifty saps, which all meet in the same mine. He has a remedy for everything; he is ready for everything; divines, dares everything, against all duty, humanity, common sense, in spite of the prayers of his friends, the entreaties of Clarissa, his own remorse. Excessive will, here as with the Harlowes, becomes a steel cog-wheel, which twists out of shape and breaks to pieces what it ought to bend, so that at last, by blind impetuosity, it is broken by its own impetus, over the ruins it has made.

Against such assaults what resources has Clarissa? A will as determined as his own. She also is armed for war, and admits that she has as much of her father's spirit as of her mother's gentleness. Though gentle, though readily driven into Christian humility, she 'had hoped to be an example to young persons' of her sex; she possesses the firmness of a man, and above all a masculine reflection.[1] What self-scrutiny! what vigilance! what minute and indefatigable observation of her conduct, and of that of others![2] No action, or word, involuntary or other gesture of Lovelace is unobserved by her, uninterpreted, unjudged, with the perspicacity and clearness of mind of a diplomatist and a moralist! You must read these long conversations, in which no word is used without calculation, genuine duels daily renewed, with death, nay, with dishonour before her. She knows it, is not disturbed, remains ever mistress of herself, never exposes herself, is not stunned, defends every inch of ground, feeling that all the world is on his side, no one for her, that she loses ground, and will lose more, that she will fall, that she is falling. And yet she bends not. What a change since Shakspeare! Whence comes this new and original idea of woman? Who has encased these yielding and tender innocents with such heroism and calculation? Secularised Puritanism. Clarissa 'never looked upon any duty, much less a voluntary vowed one, with indifference.' She has passed her whole life in looking at these duties. She has placed certain principles before her, has reasoned upon them, applied them to the various circumstances of life, has fortified herself on every point with maxims, distinctions, and arguments. She has set round her, like bristling and multiplied ramparts,

[1] See (vol. vii. Letter xlix.) among other things her last Will.

[2] She makes out statistics and a classification of Lovelace's merits and faults, with subdivisions and numbers. Take an example of this positive and practical English logic: 'That such a husband might unsettle me in all my own principles, and hasard my future hopes. That he has a very immoral character to women. That knowing this, it is a high degree of impurity to think of joining in wedlock with such a man.' She keeps all her writings, her memorandums, summaries or analyses of her own letters.

a numberless army of inflexible precepts. We can only reach her by turning over her whole mind and her whole past. This is her force, and also her weakness; for she is so carefully defended by her fortifications, that she is a prisoner; her principles are a snare to her, and her virtue destroys her. She wishes to preserve too much decorum. She refuses to apply to a magistrate, for it would make public the family quarrels. She does not resist her father openly; that would be against filial humility. She does not repel Solmes violently, and like a hound, as he is; it would be contrary to feminine delicacy. She will not leave home with Miss Howe; that might injure the character of her friend. She reproves Lovelace when he swears;[1] a good Christian ought to protest against scandal. She is argumentative and pedantic, a politician and a preacher; she wearies us, she acts not like a woman. When a room is on fire, a young girl flies barefooted, and does not do what Miss Clarissa does—ask for her slippers. I am very sorry for it, but I say it with bated breath, Clarissa had a little mind; her virtue is like the piety of devotees, literal and over-nice. She does not carry you away, she has always her catechism in her hand; she does not discover her duties, but follows instructions; she has not the audacity of great resolutions, she possesses more conscience and firmness than enthusiasm and genius.[2] This is the disadvantage of morality pushed to an extreme, no matter what the school or the aim is. By dint of regulating man, we narrow him.

Poor Richardson, unsuspiciously, has been at pains to set the thing forth in broad light, and has created Sir Charles Grandison 'a man of true honour.' I cannot say whether this model has converted many. There is nothing so insipid as an edifying hero. This Sir Charles is as correct as an automaton; he passes his life in weighing his duties, and 'with an air of gallantry.'[3] When he goes to visit a sick person, he has scruples about going on a Sunday, but reassures his conscience by saying, 'I am afraid I must borrow of the Sunday some hours on my journey; but visiting the sick is an act of mercy.'[4] Would you believe that such a man could fall in love? Such is the case, however, but in a manner of his own. Thus he writes to his betrothed:

'And now, loveliest and dearest of women, allow me to expect the honour of a line, to let me know how much of the tedious month from last Thursday you will be so good to abate. . . . My utmost gratitude will ever be engaged by the con-

[1] 'Swearing is a most unmanly vice, and cursing as poor and low a one, since it proclaims the profligate's want of power and his wickedness at the same time; for could such a one punish as he speaks, he would be a fiend.'—Vol. ii. Letter xxxviii. 282.

[2] The contrary is the case with the heroines of George Sand's novels.

[3] See *Sir Charles Grandison*, 7 vols. 1811, iii. Letter xvi. 142: 'He received the letters, standing up, bowing; and kissed the papers with an air of gallantry, that I thought greatly became him.'

[4] *Ibid.* vi. Letter xxxi. 236.

descension, whenever you shall distinguish the day of the year, distinguished as it will be to the end of my life that shall give me the greatest blessing of it and confirm me. For ever yours, Charles Grandison.'[1]

A wax figure could not be more proper. All is in the same taste. There are eight wedding-coaches, each with four horses; Sir Charles is attentive to old people; at table, the gentlemen, each with a napkin under his arm, wait upon the ladies; the bride is ever on the point of fainting; he throws himself at her feet in every kind of way:

'What, my love! In compliment to the best of parents, resume your usual presence of mind. I, else, who shall glory before a thousand witnesses in receiving the honour of your hand, shall be ready to regret that I acquiesced so cheerfully with the wishes of those parental friends for a public celebration.'[2]

Salutations begin, compliments fly about; a swarm of proprieties flutters around, like a troop of little love-cherubs, and their devout wings serve to sanctify the blessed tendernesses of the happy couple. Tears abound; Harriet bemoans the fate of Sir Hargrave Pollexfen, whilst Sir Charles,

'In a soothing, tender, and respectful manner, put his arm round me, and taking my own handkerchief, unresisted, wiped away the tears as they fell on my cheek. Sweet humanity! Charming sensibility! Check not the kindly gush. Dewdrops of heaven! (wiping away my tears, and kissing the handkerchief), dew-drops of heaven, from a mind like that heaven mild and gracious!'[3]

It is too much; we are surfeited, we tell ourselves that these phrases should be accompanied by a mandoline. The most patient of mortals feels himself sick at heart when he has swallowed a thousand pages of this sentimental twaddle, and all the milk and water of love. To crown all, Sir Charles, seeing Harriet embrace her rival, sketches the plan of a little temple, dedicated to friendship, to be built on the very spot; it is the triumph of mythological bad taste. At the end, bouquets shower down as at the opera; all the characters sing in unison a chorus in praise of Sir Charles, and his wife says:

'But could he be otherwise than the best of husbands, who was the most dutiful of sons, who is the most affectionate of brothers; the most faithful of friends: who is good upon principle in every relation of life?'[4]

He is great, he is generous, delicate, pious, irreproachable; he has never done a mean action, nor made a wrong gesture. His conscience and his wig are unsullied. Amen! Let us canonise him, and stuff him with straw.

Nor, my dear Richardson, have you, great as you are, exactly all the wit which is necessary in order to have enough. By seeking to serve morality, you prejudice it. Do you know the effect of these edifying advertisements which you stick on at the beginning or end of

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[1] *Sir Charles Grandison*, vi. Letter xxxiii 252.
[2] *Ibid.* vi. Letter lii. 358.
[3] *Ibid.* vi. Letter xxxi. 233.
[4] *Ibid.* vii. Letter lxi. 336.

your books? We are repelled, lose emotion, see the black-gowned preacher come snuffling out of the worldly dress which he had assumed for an hour; we are annoyed by the deceit. Insinuate morality, but do not inflict it. Remember there is a substratum of rebellion in the human heart, and that if we too openly set ourselves to wall it up through discipline, it escapes and looks for free air outside. You print at the end of *Pamela* the catalogue of the virtues of which she is an example; the reader yawns, forgets his pleasure, ceases to believe, and asks himself if the heavenly heroine was not an ecclesiastical puppet, trotted out to give him a lesson. You relate at the end of *Clarissa Harlowe* the punishment of all the wicked, great and small, sparing none; the reader laughs, says that things happen otherwise in this world, and bids you put in here, like Arnolphe,[1] a description 'of the cauldrons in which the souls of those who have led evil lives are to boil in the infernal regions.' We are not such fools as you take us for. There is no need that you should shout to make us afraid; that you should write out the lesson by itself, and in capitals, in order to distinguish it. We love art, and you have a scant amount of it; we want to be pleased, and you don't care to please us. You copy all the letters, detail the conversations, tell everything, prune nothing; your novels fill many volumes; spare us, use the scissors; be a literary man, not a registrar of archives. Do not pour out your library of documents on the high-road. Art is different from nature; the latter draws out, the first condenses. Twenty letters of twenty pages do not display a character; but one sharp word does. You are rendered heavy by your conscience, which drags you along step by step and low on the ground; you are afraid of your genius; you rein it in; you dare not use loud cries and frank words for violent moments. You flounder into emphatic and well-written phrases;[2] you will not show nature as it is, as Shakspeare shows it, when, stung by passion as by a hot iron, it cries out, rears, and plunges over your barriers. You cannot love it, and your punishment is that you cannot see it.[3]

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[1] A selfish and misanthropical cynic in Molière's *École des Femmes*.—Tr.

[2] Clarissa and Pamela employ too many.

[3] In *Novels and Novelists*, by W. Forsyth, 1871, it is said, ch. vii.: 'To me, I confess, *Clarissa Harlowe* is an unpleasant, not to say odious book. . . . If any book deserved the charge of sickly sentimentality, it is this; and that it should have once been so widely popular, and thought admirably adapted to instruct young women in lessons of virtue and religion, shows a strange and perverted state of the public taste, not to say public morals.' Mrs. Oliphant, in her *Historical Sketches of the Reign of George Second*, 1869, says of the same novel (ii. x. 264): 'Richardson was a respectable tradesman, . . . a good printer, . . . a comfortable soul, . . . never owing a guinea nor transgressing a rule of morality; and yet so much a poet, that he has added at least one character (Clarissa Harlowe) to the inheritance of the world, of which Shakspeare need not have been ashamed—the most celestial thing, the highest effort of his generation.'—Tr.

V.

Fielding protests on behalf of nature; and certainly to see his actions and his persons, we might think him made expressly for that: a robust, strongly built man, above six feet high, sanguine, with an excess of good humour and animal spirits, loyal, generous, affectionate, and brave, but imprudent, extravagant, a drinker, a roysterer, ruined as it were by heirloom, having seen the ups and downs of life, bespattered, but always jolly. Lady Worteley Montague says of him: 'His happy constitution made him forget everything when he was before a venison party, or over a flask of champagne.'[1] Nature sways him; he is somewhat coarse but generous. He does not restrain himself, he indulges, he follows nature's bent, not too choice in his course, not confining himself to banks, muddy, but abundantly and in a broad channel. From the outset an abundance of health and physical impetuosity plunges him into gross jovial excess, and the immoderate sap of youth bubbles up in him until he marries and becomes ripe in years. He is gay, and seeks gaiety; he is careless, and has not even literary vanity. One day Garrick begged him to cut down an awkward scene, and told him 'that a repulse would flurry him so much, he should not be able to do justice to the part.' 'If the scene is not a good one, let them find that out.' Just as was foreseen, the house made a violent uproar, and the performer tried to quell it by retiring to the green-room, where the author was supporting his spirits with a bottle of champagne. 'What is the matter, Garrick? are they hissing me now?' 'Yes, just the same passage that I wanted you to retrench.' 'Oh,' replied the author, 'I did not give them credit for it; they have found it out, have they?'[2] In this easy manner he took all mischance. He went ahead without feeling the bruises much, like a confident man, whose heart expands and whose skin is thick. When he inherited some money he feasted, gave dinners to his neighbours, kept a pack of hounds and a lot of magnificent lackeys in yellow livery. In three years he had spent it all; but courage remained, he finished his law studies, wrote two folios on the rights of the crown, became a magistrate, destroyed bands of robbers, and earned in the most insipid of labours 'the dirtiest money upon earth.' Disgust, weariness did not affect him; he was too solidly made to have the nerves of a woman. Force, activity, invention, tenderness, all overflowed in him. He had a mother's fondness for his children, adored his wife, became almost mad when he lost her, found no other consolation than to weep with his maid-servant, and ended by marrying that good and honest girl, that he might give a mother to his children; the last trait in the portrait of this valiant plebeian heart, quick in telling all, possessing

[1] *Lady Montague's Letters*, ed. Lord Wharncliffe, 2d ed. 3 vols. 1837; Letter to the Countess of Bute, iii. 120.

[2] Roscoe's *Life of Fielding*, p. xxv.

no dislikes, but all the best parts of man, except delicacy. We read his books as we drink a pure, wholesome, and rough wine, which cheers and fortifies us, and which wants nothing but bouquet.

Such a man was sure to dislike Richardson. He who loves expansive and liberal nature, drives from him like foes the solemnity, sadness, and pruderies of the Puritans. To begin with, he caricatures Richardson. His first hero, Joseph, is the brother of Pamela, and resists the proposals of his mistress, as Pamela does those of her master. The temptation, touching in the case of a girl, becomes comical in that of a young man, and the tragic turns into the grotesque. Fielding laughs heartily, like Rabelais, like Scarron. He imitates the emphatic style; ruffles the petticoats and bobs the wigs; upsets with his rude jests all the seriousness of conventionality. If you are refined, or simply well dressed, don't go along with him. He will take you to prisons, inns, dunghills, the mud of the roadside; he will make you flounder among rollicking, scandalous, vulgar adventures, and crude pictures. He has plenty of words at command, and his sense of smell is not delicate. Mr. Joseph Andrews, after leaving Lady Booby, is felled to the ground, left naked in a ditch, for dead; a stage-coach came by; a lady objects to receive a naked man inside; and the gentlemen, 'though there were several greatcoats about the coach,' could not spare them; the coachman, who had two greatcoats spread under him, refused to lend either, lest they should be made bloody.[1] This is but the outset, judge of the rest. Joseph and his friend, the good Parson Adams, give and receive a vast number of cuffs; blows resound; cans of pigs' blood are thrown at their heads; dogs tear their clothes to pieces; they lose their horse. Joseph is so good-looking, that he is assailed by the maid-servant, 'obliged to take her in his arms and to shut her out of the room;'[2] they have never any money; they are threatened with being sent to prison. Yet they go on in a merry fashion, as their brothers in Fielding's other novels, Captain Booth and Tom Jones. These hailstorms of blows, these tavern brawls, this noise of broken warming-pans and basins flung at heads, this medley of incidents and downpouring of mishaps, combine to make the most joyous music. All these honest folk fight well, walk well, eat well, drink still better. It is a pleasure to observe these potent stomachs; roast-beef goes down into them as to its natural place. Do not say that these good arms practise too much on their neighbours' skins: the neighbours' hides are healthy, and always heal quickly. Decidedly life is a good thing, and we will go along with Fielding, smiling by the way, with a broken head and a bellyful.

Shall we merely laugh? There are many things to be seen on our journey: the sentiment of nature is a talent, like the understanding of certain rules; and Fielding, turning his back on Richardson, opens up a domain as wide as that of his rival. What we call nature is this brood

[1] *The Adventures of Joseph Andrews*, bk. i. ch. xii. [2] *Ibid.* i. ch. xviii.

of secret passions, often malicious, generally vulgar, always blind, which tremble and fret within us, ill-covered by the cloak of decency and reason under which we try to disguise them; we think we lead them, and they lead us; we think our actions our own, they are theirs. They are so many, so strong, so interwoven, so ready to rise, break forth, be carried away, that their movements elude all our reasoning and our grasp. This is Fielding's domain; his art and pleasure, like Molière's, are in lifting a corner of the cloak; his characters parade with a rational air, and suddenly, through a vista, the reader perceives the inner turmoil of vanities, follies, lusts, and secret rancours which make them move. Thus, when Tom Jones' arm is broken, philosopher Square comes to console him by an application of stoical maxims; but to prove to him that pain is an indifferent matter, he bites his tongue, and lets slip an oath or two; whereupon Parson Thwackum, his opponent and rival, assures him that his mishap is a warning of Providence, and both are nearly coming to blows.[1] Another time, the prison chaplain having aired his eloquence, and entreated the condemned man to repent, accepts from him a bowl of punch, because Scripture says nothing against this liquor; and after drinking, repeats his last sermon against the pagan philosophers. Thus unveiled, natural impulse has a grotesque appearance; the people advance gravely, cane in hand, but in our eyes they are all naked. Understand, they are every whit naked; and some of their attitudes are very lively. Ladies will do well not to enter here. This powerful genius, frank and joyous, loves boisterous fairs like Rubens; the red faces, beaming with good humour, sensuality, and energy, move about his pages, flutter hither and thither, and jostle each other, and their overflowing instincts break forth in violent actions. Out of such he creates his chief characters. He has none more lifelike than these, more broadly sketched in bold and dashing outline, with a more wholesome colour. If sober people like Allworthy remain in a corner of his vast canvas, characters full of natural impulse, like Western, stand out with a relief and brightness, never seen since Falstaff. Western is a country squire, a good fellow in the main, but a drunkard, always in the saddle, full of oaths, ready with coarse language, blows, a sort of dull carter, hardened and excited by the brutality of the race, the wildness of a country life, by violent exercises, by abuse of coarse food and strong drink, full of English and rustic pride and prejudice, having never been disciplined by the constraint of the world, because he lives in the country; nor by that of education, since he can hardly read; nor of reflection, since he cannot put two ideas together; nor of authority, because he is rich and a justice of the peace, and given up, like a noisy and creaking weathercock, to every gust of passion. When contradicted, he grows red, foams at the mouth, wishes to thrash some one. 'Doff thy clothes.' They are even obliged to stop him by main

[1] *History of a Foundling*, bk. v. ch. ii.

force. He hastens to go to Allworthy to complain of Tom Jones, who has dared to fall in love with his daughter:

'It's well for un I could not get at un: I'd a licked un; I'd a spoiled his caterwauling; I'd a taught the son of a whore to meddle with meat for his master. He shan't ever have a morsel of meat of mine, or a varden to buy it. If she will ha un, one smock shall be her portion. I'd sooner give my estate to the sinking fund, that it may be sent to Hanover, to corrupt our nation with.'[1]

Allworthy says he is very sorry for it:

'Pox o' your sorrow. It will do me abundance of good, when I have lost my only child, my poor Sophy, that was the joy of my heart, and all the hope and comfort of my age. But I am resolved I will turn her out o' doors; she shall beg, and starve, and rot in the streets. Not one hapenny, not a hapenny shall she ever hae o' mine. The son of a bitch was always good at finding a hare sitting and be rotted to'n; I little thought what puss he was looking after. But it shall be the worst he ever vound in his life. She shall be no better than carrion; the skin o'er it is all he shall ha, and zu you may tell un.'[2]

His daughter tries to reason with him; he storms. Then she speaks of tenderness and obedience; he leaps about the room for joy, and tears come to his eyes. Then she recommences her prayers; he grinds his teeth, clenches his fists, stamps his feet:

'I am determined upon this match, and ha him you shall, damn me, if shat unt. Damn me, if shat unt, though dost hang thyself the next morning.'[3]

He can find no reason; he can only tell her to be a good girl. He contradicts himself, defeats his own plans; is like a blind bull, which butts to right and left, doubles on his path, touches no one, and paws the ground. At the least sound he rushes head foremost, offensively, knowing not why. His ideas are only starts or transports of flesh and blood. Never has the animal so completely covered and absorbed the man. It makes him grotesque; he is so natural and so brute-like: he allows himself to be led, and speaks like a child. He says:

'I don't know how 'tis, but, Allworthy, you make me do always just as you please; and yet I have as good an estate as you, and am in the commission of the peace just as yourself.'[4]

Nothing holds or lasts with him; he is impulsive in everything; he lives but for the moment. Rancour, interest, no passions of long continuance affect him. He embraces people whom he just before wanted to knock down. Everything with him disappears in the fire of the passion of the hour, which comes over his brain, as it were, in sudden waves, which drown the rest. Now that he is reconciled to Tom, he cannot rest until Tom marries his daughter:

'To her, boy, to her, go to her. That's it, little honeys, O that's it. Well, what, is it all over? Hath she appointed the day, boy? What, shall it be to-morrow or next day? I shan't be put off a minute longer than next day, I am

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[1] *History of a Foundling*, bk. vi. ch. x.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.* xvi. ch. ii.
[4] *Ibid.* xviii. ch. ix.

resolved. . . . I tell thee it is all flimflam. Zoodikers! she'd have the wedding to-night with all her heart. Would'st not, Sophy? . . . Where the devil is Allworthy? . . . Harkee, Allworthy, I'll bet thee five pounds to a crown, we have a boy to-morrow nine months. But prithee, tell me what wut ha? Wut ha Burgundy, Champaigne, or what? For please Jupiter, we'll make a night on't.'[1]

And when he becomes a grandfather, he spends his time in the nursery, 'where he declares the tattling of his little granddaughter, who is above a year and a half old, is sweeter music than the finest cry of dogs in England.'[2] This is pure nature, and no one has displayed it more free, more impetuous, ignoring all rule, more abandoned to physical passions, than Fielding.

It is not because he loves it like the great impartial artists, Shakspeare and Goethe; on the contrary, he is eminently a moralist; and it is one of the great marks of the age, that reformatory designs are as decided with him as with others. He gives his fictions a practical aim, and commends them by saying that the serious and tragic tone sours, whilst the comic style disposes men to be 'more full of good humour and benevolence.'[3] Moreover, he satirises vice; he looks upon the passions not as simple forces, but as objects of approbation or blame. At every step he suggests moral conclusions; he wants us to take sides; he discusses, excuses, or condemns. He writes an entire novel in an ironical style,[4] to attack and destroy rascality and treason. He is more than a painter, he is a judge, and the two parts agree in him. For a psychology produces a morality: where there is an idea of man, there is an ideal of man; and Fielding, who has seen in man nature as opposed to law, praises in man nature as opposed to law; so that, according to him, virtue is but an instinct. Generosity in his eyes is, like all sources of action, a primitive inclination; like all sources of action, it flows on, receiving no good from catechisms and phrases; like all sources of action, it flows at times too copious and quick. Take it as it is, and do not try to oppress it under a discipline, or to replace it by an argument. Mr. Richardson, your heroes, so correct, constrained, so carefully made up with their impedimenta of maxims, are cathedral vergers, of use but to drone in a procession. Square or Thwackum, your tirades on philosophical or Christian virtue are mere words, only fit to be heard after dinner. Virtue is in the mood and the blood; a gossipy education and cloistral severity do not assist it. Give me a man, not a show-mannikin or a mere machine, to spout phrases. My hero is the man who is born generous, as a dog is born affectionate, and a horse brave. I want a living heart, full of warmth and force, not a dry pedant, bent on squaring all his actions. This ardent character will perhaps carry the hero too far; I pardon his escapades. He will get drunk unawares; he will pick up a girl on his way;

[1] *History of a Foundling*, xviii. ch. xii.
[2] Last chapter of the *History of a Foundling*.
[3] Preface to *Joseph Andrews*.
[4] *Jonathan Wild*.

he will hit out with a zest; he will not refuse a duel; he will suffer a fine lady to appreciate him, and will accept her purse; he will be imprudent, will injure his reputation, like Tom Jones; he will be a bad manager, and will get into debt, like Booth. Pardon him for having muscles, nerves, senses, and that overflow of anger or ardour which urges forward animals of a noble breed. But he will let himself be beaten till he bleeds before he betrays a poor gamekeeper. He will pardon his mortal enemy readily, from sheer kindness, and will send him money secretly. He will be loyal to his mistress, and will be faithful to her, spite of all offers, in the worst destitution, and without the least hope of winning her. He will be liberal with his purse, his trouble, his sufferings, his blood; he will not boast of it; he will have neither pride, vanity, affectation, nor dissimulation; bravery and kindness will abound in his heart, as good water in a good spring. He may be stupid, like Captain Booth, a gambler, even extravagant, unable to manage his affairs, liable one day through temptation to be unfaithful to his wife; but he will be so sincere in his repentance, his error will be so involuntary, he will be so carefully, genuinely tender, that she will love him exceedingly,[1] and in good truth he will deserve it. He will be a nurse to her when she is ill, behave as a mother to her; he will himself see to her lying-in; he will feel towards her the adoration of a lover, always, before all the world, even before Miss Matthews, who seduced him. He says: 'If I had the world, I was ready to lay it at my Amelia's feet; and so, Heaven knows, I would ten thousand worlds.'[2] He weeps like a child on thinking of her; he listens to her like a little child. 'I believe I am able to recollect much the greatest part (of what she uttered); for the impression is never to be effaced from my memory.'[3] He dressed himself 'with all the expedition imaginable, singing, whistling, hurrying, attempting by every method to banish thought,'[4] and galloped away because he cannot endure her tears. In this soldier's body, under this brawler's thick breastplate, there is a true woman's heart, which melts, which a trifle disturbs, when she whom he loves is in question; timid in its tenderness, inexhaustible in devotion, in trust, in self-denial, in the communication of its feelings. When a man possesses this, overlook the rest; with all his excesses and his follies, he is better than your well-dressed devotees.

To this we reply: You do well to defend nature, but let it be on condition that you suppress nothing. One thing is wanted in your

[1] Amelia is the perfect English wife, an excellent cook, so devoted as to pardon her husband his accidental infidelities, always looking forward to the accoucheur. She says even (bk. iv. ch. vi.), 'Dear Billy, though my understanding be much inferior to yours,' etc. She is excessively modest, always blushing and tender. Bagillard having written her some love-letters, she throws them away, and says (bk. iii. ch. ix.): 'I would not have such a letter in my possession for the universe; I thought my eyes contaminated with reading it.'

[2] *Amelia*, bk. ii. ch. viii. [3] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. i. [4] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. ii.

strongly-built folks—refinement; the delicate dreams, enthusiastic elevation, and trembling delicacy, exist in nature equally with coarse vigour, noisy hilarity, and frank kindness. Poetry is true, like prose; and if there are eaters and boxers, there are also knights and artists. Cervantes, whom you imitate, and Shakspeare, whom you recall, had this refinement, and they have painted it; in this abundant harvest, with which you fill your arms, you have forgotten the flowers. We tire at last of your fisticuffs and tavern bills. You flounder too readily in cowhouses, among the ecclesiastical pigs of Parson Trulliber. We would fain see you have more regard for the modesty of your heroines; wayside accidents raise their tuckers too often; and Fanny, Sophia, Mrs. Heartfree, may continue pure, yet we cannot help remembering the assaults which have lifted their petticoats. You are so rude yourself, that you are insensible to what is atrocious. You persuade Tom Jones falsely, yet for an instant, that Mrs. Waters, whom he has made his mistress, is his mother, and you leave the reader long buried in the shame of this supposition. And then you are obliged to become unnatural in order to depict love; you can give but constrained letters; the transports of your Tom Jones are only the author's phrases. For want of ideas he declaims odes. You are only aware of the impetuosity of the senses, the upwelling of the blood, the effusion of tenderness, but not of the nervous exaltation and poetic rapture. Man, such as you conceive him, is a good buffalo; and perhaps he is the hero required by a people which is itself called John Bull.

VI.

At all events this hero is powerful and formidable; and if at this period you collect in your mind the scattered features of the faces which the novel-writers have made pass before us, you will feel yourself transported into a half-barbarous state, and to a race whose energy must terrify or revolt all your gentleness. Now open a more literal copyist of life: they are doubtless all such, and declare—Fielding amongst them—that if they imagine a feature, it is because they have seen it; but Smollett has this advantage, that, being mediocre, he chalks out the figures insipidly, prosaically, without transforming them by the illumination of genius: the joviality of Fielding and the rigour of Richardson are not there to lit up or ennoble the pictures. Observe carefully Smollett's manners; listen to the confessions of this imitator of Lesage, who reproaches that author with being gay, and jesting with the mishaps of his hero. He says:

'The disgraces of Gil Blas are, for the most part, such as rather excite mirth than compassion: he himself laughs at them, and his transitions from distress to happiness, or at least ease, are so sudden that neither the reader has time to pity him, nor himself to be acquainted with affliction. This conduct . . . prevents that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader against the sordid and vicious disposition of the world. I have attempted to represent modest merit

struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed from his own want of experience as well as from the selfishness, envy, malice, and base indifference of mankind.'[1]

It is no longer merely showers of blows, but also of knife and sword thrusts, as well as pistol shots. In such a world, when a girl goes out she runs the risk of coming back a woman; and when a man goes out, he runs the risk of not coming back at all. The women bury their nails in the faces of the men; the well-bred gentlemen, like Peregrine Pickle, whip gentlemen soundly. Having deceived a husband, who refuses to demand satisfaction, Peregrine calls his two servants, 'and ordered them to duck him in the canal.'[2] Misrepresented by a curate, whom he has horsewhipped, he gets an innkeeper 'to rain a shower of blows upon his (the priest's) carcass,' who also 'laid hold of one of his ears with his teeth, and bit it unmercifully.'[3] I could quote from memory a score more of outrages begun or completed. Savage insults, broken jaws, men on the ground beaten with sticks, the churlish sourness of conversations, the coarse brutality of jests, give an idea of a pack of bull-dogs eager to fight each other, who, when they begin to get lively, still amuse themselves by tearing away pieces of flesh. A Frenchman can hardly endure the story of *Roderick Random*, or rather that of Smollett, when he is in a man-of-war. He is pressed, that is to say, carried off by force, knocked down, attacked with 'cudgels and drawn cutlasses,' 'pinioned like a malefactor,' and rolled on board, covered with blood, before the sailors, who laugh at his wounds; and one of them, 'seeing my hair clotted together with blood, as it were, into distinct cords, took notice that my bows were manned with the red ropes, instead of my side.'[4] 'He desired one of his fellow-captives, who was unfettered, to take a handkerchief out of his pocket, and tie it round his head to stop the bleeding; he pulled out his handkerchief, 'tis true, but sold it before my face to a bum-boat woman for a quart of gin.' Captain Oakum declares he will have no more sick in his ship, ordered them to be brought on the quarter-deck, commanded that some should receive a round dozen; some spitting blood, others fainting from weakness, whilst not a few became delirious; many died, and of the sixty-one sick, only a dozen remained alive.[5] To get into this dark, suffocating hospital, swarming with vermin, it is necessary to creep under the close hammocks, and forcibly separate them with the shoulders, before you can reach the patients. Read the story of Miss Williams, a wealthy young girl, of good family, reduced to the trade of a prostitute, robbed, hungry, sick, shivering, stroling about the streets in the long winter nights, amongst 'a number of naked wretches reduced to rags and filth, huddled together like swine, in the corner of a dark alley,' who depend 'upon the addresses of the lowest class, and are fain to

[1] Preface to *Roderick Random*.
[2] *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. lx.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. xxix.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxiv.
[5] *Ibid.* ch. xxvii.

allay the rage of hunger and cold with gin; degenerate into a brutal insensibility, rot and die upon a dunghill.'[1] She was thrown into Bridewell, where, she says, 'in the midst of a hellish crew I was subjected to the tyranny of a barbarian, who imposed upon me tasks that I could not possibly perform, and then punished my incapacity with the utmost rigour and inhumanity. I was often whipped into a swoon, and lashed out of it, during which miserable intervals I was robbed by my fellow-prisoners of everything about me, even to my cap, shoes, and stockings: I was not only destitute of necessaries, but even of food, so that my wretchedness was extreme.' One night she tried to hang herself. Two of her fellow-prisoners, who watched her, prevented her. 'In the morning my attempt was published among the prisoners, and punished with thirty stripes, the pain of which, co-operating with my disappointment and disgrace, bereft me of my senses, and threw me into an ecstasy of madness, during which I tore the flesh from my bones with my teeth, and dashed my head against the pavement.'[2] In vain you turn your eyes on the hero of the novel, Roderick Random, to repose a little after such a spectacle. He is sensual and coarse, like Fielding's heroes, but not good and jovial as these. The generous wine of Fielding, in Smollett's hands, becomes brandy of the dram-shop. His heroes are selfish; they revenge themselves barbarously. Roderick oppresses the faithful Strap, and ends by marrying him to a prostitute. Peregrine Pickle attacks by a most brutal and cowardly plot the honour of a young girl, whom he wants to marry, and who is the sister of his best friend. We get to hate his rancorous, concentrated, obstinate character, which is at once that of an absolute king accustomed to please himself at the expense of others' happiness, and that of a boor with only the varnish of education. We should be uneasy at living near him; he is good for nothing but to shock or tyrannise over others. We avoid him as we would a dangerous beast; the sudden rush of animal passion and the force of his firm will are so overpowering in him, that when he fails he becomes outrageous. He draws his sword against an innkeeper; he must bleed him, grows mad. Everything, even to his generosities, is spoiled by pride; all, even to his gaieties, is clouded by harshness. Peregrine's amusements are barbarous, and those of Smollett are after the same style. He exaggerates caricature; he thinks to amuse us by showing us mouths gaping to the ears, and noses half-a-foot long; he magnifies a national prejudice or a professional trick until it absorbs the whole character; he jumbles together the most repulsive oddities,—a Lieutenant Lismahago half roasted by Red Indians; old jack-tars who pass their life in shouting and travestying all sorts of ideas into their nautical jargon; old maids as ugly as monkeys, as withered as skeletons, and as sour as vinegar; maniacs steeped in pedantry, hypochondria, misanthropy, and silence. Far from sketching them slightly, as Le Sage

[1] *Peregrine Pickle*, ch. xxiii. [2] *Ibid.*

does in *Gil Blas*, he brings into prominent relief each disagreeable feature, overloads it with details, without considering whether they are too numerous, without reflecting that they are excessive, without feeling that they are odious, without perceiving that they are disgusting. The public whom he addresses is on a level with his energy and his coarseness; and in order to move such nerves, a writer cannot strike too hard.[1]

But, at the same time, to civilise this barbarity and to control this violence, a faculty appears, common to all, authors and public: serious reflection attached to the observation of character. Their eyes are turned toward the inner man. They note exactly the individual peculiarities, and mark them with such a precise imprint that their personage becomes a type, which cannot be forgotten. They are psychologists. The title of a comedy of old Ben Jonson's, *Every Man in his Humour*, indicates how this taste is ancient and national amongst them. Smollett writes a whole novel, *Humphrey Clinker*, on this idea. No action; the book is a collection of letters written during a tour in Scotland and England. Each of the travellers, after his bent of mind, judges variously of the same objects. A generous, grumbling old gentleman, who amuses himself by thinking himself ill, a crabbed old maid in search of a husband; a lady's maid, ingenuous and vain, who bravely mutilates her spelling; a series of originals, who one after another bring their oddities on the scene,—such are the characters: the pleasure of the reader consists in recognising their humour in their style, in foreseeing their follies, in perceiving the thread which pulls each of their motions, in verifying the agreement of their ideas and their actions. Push this study of human peculiarities to excess, and you will come upon the origin of Sterne's talent.

VII.

Figure to yourself a man who goes on a journey, wearing on his eyes a pair of marvellously magnifying spectacles. A hair on his hand, a speck on a tablecloth, a fold of a moving garment, will interest him: at this rate he will not go very far; he will go six steps in a day, and will not quit his room. So Sterne writes four

[1] In *Novels and Novelists*, by W. Forsyth, the author says, ch. v. 159: 'What is the character of most of these books (novels) which were to correct follies and regulate morality? Of a great many of them, and especially those of Fielding and Smollett, the prevailing features are grossness and licentiousness. Love degenerates into a mere animal passion. . . . The language of the characters abounds in oaths and gross expressions. . . . The heroines allow themselves to take part in conversations which no modest woman would have heard without a blush. And yet these novels were the delight of a bygone generation, and were greedily devoured by women as well as men. Are we therefore to conclude that our great-great-grandmothers . . . were less chaste and moral than their female posterity? I answer, certainly not; but we must infer that they were inferior to them in delicacy and refinement. They were accustomed to hear a spade called a spade, and words which would shock the more fastidious ear in the reign of Queen Victoria were then in common and daily use.'—Tr.

volumes to record the birth of his hero. He perceives the infinitely little, and describes the imperceptible. A man parts his hair on one side: this, according to Sterne, depends on his whole character, which is of a piece with that of his father, his mother, his uncle, and his whole ancestry; it depends on the structure of his brain, which depends on the circumstances of his conception and his birth, and these on the fancies of his parents, the humour of the moment, the talk of the preceding hour, the contrarieties of the last curate, a cut thumb, twenty knots made on a bag; I know not how many things besides. The six or eight volumes of *Tristram Shandy* are employed in summing them up; for the smallest and dullest incident, a sneeze, a badly-shaven beard, drags after it an inextricable network of inter-involved causes, which from above, below, right and left, by invisible prolongations and ramifications, are buried in the depths of a character and in the remote vistas of events. Instead of extracting, like the novel-writers, the principal root, Sterne, with marvellous devices and success, devotes himself to drawing out the tangled skein of numberless threads, which are sinuously immersed and dispersed, so as to suck in from all sides the sap and the life. Slender, intertwined, buried as they are, he finds them; he extricates them without breaking, brings them to the light; and there, where we fancied was but a stalk, we see with wonder the underground mass and vegetation of the multiplied fibres and fibrils, by which the visible plant grows and is supported.

This is truly a strange talent, made up of blindness and insight, which resembles those diseases of the retina in which the over-excited nerve becomes at once dull and penetrating, incapable of seeing what the most ordinary eyes perceive, capable of observing what the most piercing sight misses. In fact, Sterne is a sickly and eccentric humorist, an ecclesiastic and a libertine, a fiddler and a philosopher, 'who whimpered over a dead donkey, but left his mother to starve,' selfish in act, selfish in word, who in everything is the reverse of himself and of others. His book is like a great storehouse of articles of *virtu*, where the curiosities of all ages, kinds, and countries lie jumbled in a heap; texts of excommunication, medical consultations, passages of unknown or imaginary authors, scraps of scholastic erudition, strings of absurd histories, dissertations, addresses to the reader. His pen leads him; he has neither sequence nor plan; nay, when he lights upon anything orderly, he purposely contorts it; with a kick he sends the pile of folios next to him over the history he has commenced, and dances on the top of them. He delights in disappointing us, in sending us astray by interruptions and outrages.[1] Gravity displeases him, he treats it as

[1] There is a distinct trace of a spirit similar to that which is here sketched, in a select few of the English writers. Pultock's *Peter Wilkins the Flying Man*, Amory's *Life of John Buncle*, and Southey's *Doctor* are instances of this. Rabelais is probably their prototype.—TR.

a hypocrite; to his liking folly is better, and he paints himself in Yorick. In a well-constituted mind ideas march one after another, with uniform motion or acceleration; in this uncouth brain they jump about like a rout of masks at a carnival, in troops, each dragging his neighbour by the feet, head, coat, amidst the most promiscuous and unforeseen hubbub. All his little lopped phrases are somersaults; we pant as we read. The tone is never for two minutes the same; laughter comes, then the beginning of emotion, then scandal, then wonder, then tenderness, then laughter again. The mischievous joker pulls and entangles the threads of all our feelings, and makes us go hither, thither, irregularly, like puppets. Amongst these various threads there are two which he pulls more willingly than the rest. Like all men who have nerves, he is subject to tenderness; not that he is really kindly and tender; on the contrary, his life is that of an egotist; but on certain days he must needs weep, and he makes us weep with him. He is moved on behalf of a captive bird, of a poor ass, which, accustomed to blows, 'looked up pensive,' and seemed to say, 'Don't thrash me with it (the halter); but if you will, you may.'[1] He will write a couple of pages on the attitude of this donkey, and Priam at the feet of Achilles was not more touching. Thus in a silence, in an oath, in the most trifling domestic action, he hits upon exquisite refinements and little heroisms, a sort of charming flowers, invisible to everybody else, which grow in the dust of the driest road. One day Uncle Toby, the poor sick captain, catches, after 'infinite attempts,' a big buzzing fly, who has cruelly tormented him all dinner-time; he gets up, crosses the room on his suffering leg, and opening the window, cries: 'Go, poor devil, get thee gone; why should I hurt thee? This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me.'[2] This womanish sensibility is too fine to be described; we should have to give a whole story—that of Lefevre, for instance—that the perfume might be inhaled; this perfume evaporates as soon as we touch it, and is like the weak fleeting odour of the plants, brought for one moment into a sick-chamber. What still more increases this sad sweetness, is the contrast of the free and easy waggeries which, like a hedge of nettles, encircles them on all sides. Sterne, like all men whose mechanism is over-excited, has irregular appetites. He loves the nude, not from a feeling of the beautiful, and in the manner of painters, not from sensuality and frankness like Fielding, not from a search after pleasure, like Dorat, Boufflers, and all those refined pleasure-seekers, who at the same time were rhyming and enjoying themselves in France. If he goes into dirty places, it is because they are forbidden and not frequented. What he seeks there is singularity and scandal. The allurement of this forbidden fruit is not the fruit, but the prohibition; for he bites by preference where

[1] Sterne's Works, 7 vols., 1783, 3; *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, vii. ch. xxxii.

[2] *Ibid.* 1, ii. ch. xii.

the fruit is withered or worm-eaten. That an epicurean delights in detailing the pretty sins of a pretty woman is nothing wonderful; but that a novelist takes pleasure in watching the bedroom of a musty, fusty old couple, in observing the consequences of the fall of a burning chestnut in a pair of breeches,[1] in detailing the questions of Mrs. Wadman on the consequences of wounds in the groin,[2] can only be explained by the aberration of a perverted fancy, which finds its amusement in repugnant ideas, as spoiled palates are pleased by the pungent flavour of mouldy cheese.[3] Thus, to read Sterne we should wait for days when we are in a peculiar kind of humour, days of spleen, rain, or when through nervous irritation we are disgusted with rationality. In fact, his characters are as unreasonable as himself. He sees in man nothing but fancy, and what he calls the hobby-horse—Uncle Toby's taste for fortifications, Mr. Shandy's fancy for oratorical tirades and philosophical systems. This hobby-horse, according to him, is like a wart, so small at first that we hardly perceive it, and only when it is in a strong light; but it gradually increases, becomes covered with hairs, grows red, and buds out all around: its possessor, who is pleased with and admires it, nourishes it, until at last it is changed into a vast wen, and the whole face disappears under the invasion of the parasite excrescence. No one has equalled Sterne in the history of these human hypertrophies; he puts down the seed, feeds it gradually, makes the propagating threads creep round about, shows the little veins and microscopic arteries which inosculate within, counts the palpitations of the blood which passes through them, explains their changes of colour and increase of bulk. The psychological observer attains here one of his extreme developments. A far advanced art is necessary to describe, beyond the confines of regularity and health, the exception or the degeneration; and the English novel is completed here by adding to the representation of form the picture of deformations.

VIII.

The moment approaches when purified manners will, by purifying the novel, impress upon it its final character. Of the two great tendencies manifested by it, native brutality and intense reflection, one at last conquers the other: literature, grown severe, expels from fiction the coarseness of Smollett and the indecencies of Sterne; and the novel, in every respect moral, before falling into the almost prudish hands of

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[1] *Tristram Shandy*, 2, iv. ch. xxvii. [2] *Ibid.* 3, ix. ch. xx.

[3] Sterne, Goldsmith, Burke, Sheridan, Moore, have a tone of their own, which comes from their blood, or from their proximate or distant parentage—the Irish tone. So Hume, Robertson, Smollett, W. Scott, Burns, Beattie, Reid, D. Stewart, etc., have the Scotch tone. In the Irish or Celtic tone we find an excess of chivalry, sensuality, expansion; in short, a mind less equally balanced, more sympathetic and less practical. The Scotchman, on the other hand, is an Englishman, either slightly refined or narrowed, because he has suffered more and fasted more.

Miss Burney, passes into the noble hands of Goldsmith. His *Vicar of Wakefield* is 'a prose idyl,' somewhat spoilt by phrases too well written, but at bottom as homely as a Flemish picture. Observe in Terburg or Mieris' paintings a woman at market or a burgomaster emptying his long glass of beer: the faces are vulgar, the ingenuousness is comical, the cookery occupies the place of honour; yet these good folk are so peaceful, so contented with their small but secure happiness, that we envy them. The impression left by Goldsmith's book is pretty much the same. The excellent Dr. Primrose is a country clergyman, the whole of whose adventures have for a long time consisted in 'migrations from the blue bed to the brown.' He has cousins, 'even to the fortieth remove,' who came to eat his dinner and sometimes to borrow a pair of boots. His wife, who has all the education of the time, is a perfect cook, can almost read, excels in pickling and preserving, and at dinner gives the history of every dish. His daughters aspire to elegance, and even 'make a wash for the face over the fire.' His son Moses gets cheated at the fair, and sells the pony for a gross of green spectacles. Primrose himself writes treatises, which no one buys, against second marriages of the clergy; writes beforehand in his wife's epitaph, though she was still living, that she was the only wife of Dr. Primrose, and by way of encouragement, places this piece of eloquence in an elegant frame over the chimney-piece. But the household continues the even tenor of its way; the daughters and the mother slightly domineer over the father of the family; he lets them, like a good fellow; and now and again delivers himself at most of an innocent jest, busies himself in his new farm, with his two horses, wall-eyed Blackberry and the other without a tail:

'Nothing could exceed the neatness of my enclosures, the elms and hedge-rows appearing with inexpressible beauty. . . . Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind, and a prattling river before; on one side a meadow, on the other a green. . . . (It) consisted but of one story, and was covered with thatch, which gave it an air of great snugness; the walls on the inside were nicely whitewashed. . . . Though the same room served us for parlour and kitchen, that only made it the warmer. Besides, as it was kept with the utmost neatness, the dishes, plates, and coppers, being well scoured, and all disposed in bright rows on the shelves, the eye was agreeably relieved, and did not want richer furniture.'[1]

They make hay all together, sit under the honeysuckle to drink a bottle of gooseberry wine; the girls sing, the two little ones read; and the parents 'would stroll down the sloping field, that was embellished with blue bells and centaury:'

'But let us have one bottle more, Deborah, my life, and Moses, give us a good song. What thanks do we not owe to Heaven for thus bestowing tranquillity, health, and competence! I think myself happier now than the greatest monarch upon earth. He has no such fire-side, nor such pleasant faces about it.'[2]

[1] *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. iv. [2] *Ibid.* ch. xvii.

Such is moral happiness. Their misfortune is no less moral. The poor vicar has lost his fortune, and, removing to a small living, turns farmer. The squire of the neighbourhood seduces and carries off his eldest daughter; his house takes fire; his arm was burnt in a terrible manner in saving his two little children. He is put in prison, amongst wretches and rogues, who swear and blaspheme, in a vile atmosphere, sleeping on straw, feeling that his illness increases, foreseeing that his family will soon be without bread, learning that his daughter is dying. Yet he does not give way: he remains a priest and head of a family, prescribes to each of them his duty; encourages, consoles, orders, preaches to the prisoners, endures their coarse jests, reforms them; establishes in the prison useful work, and 'institutes fines for punishment and rewards for industry.' It is not hardness of heart nor a morose temperament which gives him strength; he has the most paternal soul, the most sociable, humane, open to gentle emotions and familiar tenderness. He says:

'I have no resentment now; and though he (the squire) has taken from me what I held dearer than all his treasures, though he has wrung my heart (for I am sick almost to fainting, very sick, my fellow-prisoner), yet that shall never inspire me with vengeance. . . . If this (my) submission can do him any pleasure, let him know, that if I have done him any injury, I am sorry for it. . . . I should detest my own heart, if I saw either pride or resentment lurking there. On the contrary, as my oppressor has been once my parishioner, I hope one day to present him up an unpolluted soul at the eternal tribunal.'[1]

Nothing is effectual: the wretch haughtily repulses the noble application of the vicar, and in addition causes his second daughter to be carried off, and the eldest son thrown into prison under a false accusation of murder. At this moment all the affections of the father are wounded, all his consolations lost, all his hopes ruined. 'His heart weeps to behold' all this misery, he was going to curse the cause of it all; but soon, returning to his profession and his duty, he thinks how he will prepare to fit his son and himself for eternity, and by way of being useful to as many people as he can, he wishes at the same time to exhort his fellow-prisoners. He 'made an effort to rise on the straw, but wanted strength, and was able only to recline against the wall; my son and his mother supported me on either side.'[2] In this condition he speaks, and his sermon, contrasting with his condition, is the more moving. It is a dissertation in the English style, made up of close reasoning, seeking only to establish that, from the nature of pleasure and pain, the wretched must be repaid the balance of their sufferings in the life hereafter. We see the sources of this virtue, born of Christianity and natural kindness, but long nourished by inner reflection. Meditation, which usually produces only phrases, results with Dr. Primrose in actions. Verily reason has here taken the helm,

[1] *The Vicar of Wakefield*, ch. xxviii. [2] *Ibid.* ch. xxviii.

and it has taken it without oppressing other feelings; a rare and excellent spectacle, which, uniting and harmonising in one character the best features of the manners and morals of the time and country, creates an admiration and love for pious and orderly, domestic and disciplined, laborious and rural life. Protestant and English virtue has not a more approved and amiable exemplar. Religious, affectionate, rational, the Vicar unites dispositions which seemed irreconcilable; a clergyman, a farmer, a head of a family, he enhances those characters which appeared fit only for comic or homely parts.

IX.

In the centre of this group stands a strange character, the most esteemed of his time, a sort of literary dictator. Richardson was his friend, and gave him essays for his paper; Goldsmith, with an engaging vanity, admires him, whilst he suffers himself to be continually outshone by him; Miss Burney imitates his style, and reveres him as a father. Gibbon the historian, Reynolds the painter, Garrick the actor, Burke the orator, Sir William Jones the Orientalist, come to his club to converse with him. Lord Chesterfield, who had lost his favour, vainly tried to regain it, by proposing to assign to him, on every word in the language, the authority of a dictator.[1] Boswell dogs his steps, sets down his opinions, and at night fills quartos with them. His criticism becomes law; men crowd to hear him talk; he is the arbiter of style. Let us transport in imagination this ruler of mind, Dr. Samuel Johnson, into France, among the pretty drawing-rooms, full of elegant philosophers and epicurean manners; the violence of the contrast will mark better than all argument, the bent and predilections of the English mind.

There appears then a man whose 'person was large, robust, approaching to the gigantic, and grown unwieldy from corpulency,'[2] with a gloomy and unpolished air, 'his countenance disfigured by the king's evil,' and blinking with one of his eyes, 'in a full suit of plain brown clothes,' and with not overclean linen, suffering from morbid melancholy since his birth, and moreover a hypochondriac.[3] In company he would sometimes retire to a window or corner of a room, and mutter a Latin verse or a prayer.[4] At other times, in a recess, he would roll his head, sway his body backward and forward, stretch out and then convulsively draw back his leg. His biographer relates that it 'was his constant anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, . . . so as that either his right or his left foot should constantly make the first actual movement; . . . when he had neglected or gone wrong

[1] See, in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. Croker, 1853, ch. xi. p. 85, Chesterfield's complimentary paper on Johnson's *Dictionary*, printed in the *World*.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xxx. 269.

[3] *Ibid.* ch. iii. 14 and 15.

[4] *Ibid.* ch. xviii. 165, n. 4.

in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in the proper posture to begin the ceremony, and having gone through it, walk briskly on and join his companion.'[1] People sat down to table. Suddenly, in a moment of abstraction, he stoops, and clenching hold of the foot of a lady, drew off her shoe.[2] Hardly was the dinner served when he darted on the food; 'his looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others; (he) indulged with such intenseness, that, while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible.'[3] If by chance the hare was high, or the pie had been made with rancid butter, he no longer ate, but devoured. When at last his appetite was satisfied, and he consented to speak, he disputed, shouted, made a sparring-match of his conversation, snatched a triumph no matter how, laid down his opinion dogmatically, and maltreated those whom he was refuting. 'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig.'[4] 'My dear lady (to Mrs Thrale), talk no more of this; nonsense can be defended but by nonsense.'[5] 'One thing I know, which you don't seem to know, that you are very uncivil.'[6] 'In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, . . . sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen. . . . Generally, when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, . . . he used to blow out his breath like a whale,'[7] and swallow several cups of tea.

Then in a low voice, cautiously, men would ask Garrick and Boswell the history and habits of this strange being. He had lived like a cynic and an eccentric, having passed his youth reading miscellaneously, especially Latin folios, even those least known, such as Macrobius; he had found on a shelf in his father's shop the Latin works of Petrarch, whilst he was looking for apples, and had read them;[8] 'he published proposals for printing by subscription the Latin poems of Politian.'[9] At twenty-five he had married for love a woman of about fifty, 'very fat, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, flaring and fantastic in her dress,'[10] and who had children as old as himself. Having come to London to earn his bread, some, seeing his convulsive grimaces, took him for an idiot; others, seeing his robust frame, advised him to buy a porter's knot.[11] For thirty years he worked like a hack for the publishers, whom he used to thrash when they became impertinent;[12] always shabby, having

[1] *Life of Johnson*, ch. xviii. 166.
[2] *Ibid.* ch. xlviii. 439, n. 3.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 159.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxvi. 236.
[5] *Ibid.* ch. xxii. 201.
[6] *Ibid.* ch. lxviii. 628.
[7] *Ibid.* ch. xviii. 166.
[8] *Ibid.* ch. ii. 12.
[9] *Ibid.* ch. iv. 22.
[10] *Ibid.* ch. iv. 26.
[11] *Ibid.* ch. v. 28, note 2.
[12] *Ibid.* ch. vii. 46.

once fasted two days;[1] content when he could dine on a 'cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny;[2] having written *Rasselas* in eight nights, to pay for his mother's funeral. Now pensioned[3] by the king, freed from his daily labours, he gave way to his natural indolence, lying in bed often till mid-day and after. He is visited at that hour. We mount the stairs of a gloomy house on the north side of Fleet Street, the busy quarter of London, in a narrow and obscure court; and as we enter, we hear the scoldings of four old women and an old quack doctor, poor penniless creatures, bad in health and in disposition, whom he has rescued, whom he supports, who vex or insult him. We ask for the doctor, a negro opens the door; we gather round the master's bed; there are always many distinguished people at his levee, including even ladies. Thus surrounded, 'he declaims, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stays late,'[4] talks all the evening, goes out to enjoy in the streets the London mud and fog, picks up a friend to talk again, and is busy pronouncing oracles and maintaining his opinions till four in the morning.

Whereupon we ask if it is the freedom of his opinions which is fascinating. His friends answer, that there is no more indomitable partisan of order. He is called the Hercules of Toryism. From infancy he detested the Whigs, and he never spoke of them but as public malefactors. He insults them even in his *Dictionary*. He exalts Charles the Second and James the Second as two of the best kings who have ever reigned.[5] He justifies the arbitrary taxes which Government presumes to levy on the Americans.[6] He declares that 'Whiggism is a negation of all principle;'[7] that 'the first Whig was the devil;'[8] that 'the Crown has not power enough;'[9] that 'mankind are happier in a state of inequality and subordination.'[10] Frenchmen of the present time, the admirers of the *Contrat Social*, soon feel, on reading or hearing all this, that they are no longer in France. And what must they feel when, a few moments later, the Doctor says:

'I think him (Rousseau) one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. . . . I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.'[11] . . .

It seems that in England people do not like philosophical innovators.

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[1] *Life of Johnson*, ch. xvii. 159.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. v. 28.

[3] He had formerly put in his *Dictionary* the following definition of the word pension: '*Pension*—an allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state-hireling for treason to his country.' This drew of course afterwards all the sarcasms of his adversaries upon himself.

[4] Boswell's *Life*, ch. xxiv. 216.

[5] *Ibid.* ch. xlix. 444.

[6] *Ibid.* ch. xlviii. 435.

[7] *Ibid.* ch. xvi. 148.

[8] *Ibid.* ch. lxvi. 606.

[9] *Ibid.* ch. xxvi. 236.

[10] *Ibid.* ch. xxviii. 252.

[11] *Ibid.* ch. xix. 175.

Let us see if Voltaire will be spared: 'It is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them (Rousseau and Voltaire).'[1] In good sooth, this is clear. But can we not look for truth outside an Established Church? No; 'no honest man could be a Deist; for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity.'[2] Here is a peremptory Christian; there are scarcely any in France so decisive. Moreover, he is an Anglican, with a passion for the hierarchy, an admirer of established order, hostile to the Dissenters. You will see him bow to an archbishop with peculiar veneration.[3] You will hear him reprove one of his friends 'for saying grace without mention of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'[4] If you speak to him of a Quakers' meeting, and of a woman preaching, he will tell you that 'a woman preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs; it is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.'[5] He is a Conservative, and does not fear being considered antiquated. He went at one o'clock in the morning into the Church of St. John, Clerkenwell, to interrogate a tormented spirit, which had promised to 'give a token of her presence there by a knock upon her coffin.'[6] If you look at Boswell's Life of him, you will find there fervent prayers, examinations of conscience, and rules of conduct. Amidst prejudices and follies he has a deep conviction, active faith, severe morality. He is a Christian from his heart and conscience, reason and practice. The thought of God, the fear of the last judgment, engross and reform him. He said one day to Garrick: 'I'll come no more behind your scenes, David, for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities.' He reproaches himself with his indolence, implores God's pardon, is humble, has scruples. All this is very strange. We ask men what can please them in this grumbling bear, with the manners of a beadle and the inclinations of a constable? They answer, that in London people are less exacting than in Paris, as to manners and politeness; that in England they allow energy to be rude and virtue odd; that they put up with a combative conversation; that public opinion is all on the side of the constitution and Christianity; and that society was right to take for its master a man who, by its style and precepts, best suited its bent.

We now send for his books, and after an hour we observe, that whatever the work be, tragedy or dictionary, biography or essay, he always keeps the same tone. 'Dr. Johnson,' Goldsmith said one day to him, 'if you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales.'[7] In fact, his phraseology rolls always in solemn and majestic periods, in which every substantive marches ceremoniously, accom-

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[1] Boswell's *Life*, ch. xix. 176.
[2] *Ibid.* ch. xix. 174.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. lxxv. 723.
[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxiv. 218
[5] *Ibid.* ch. xvii. 157.
[6] *Ibid.* ch. xv 138, note 3.
[7] *Ibid.* ch. xxviii. 256.

panied by its epithet; great, pompous words peal like an organ; every proposition is set forth balanced by a proposition of equal length; thought is developed with the compassed regularity and official splendour of a procession. Classical prose attains its perfection in him, as classical poetry in Pope. Art cannot be more consummate, or nature more forced. No one has confined ideas in more strait compartments; none has given stronger relief to dissertation and proof; none has imposed more despotically on story and dialogue the forms of argumentation and violent declamation; none has more generally mutilated the flowing liberty of conversation and life by antitheses and technical words. It is the completion and the excess, the triumph and the tyranny, of oratorical style.[1] We understand now that an oratorical age would recognise him as a master, and attribute to him in eloquence the primacy which it attributed to Pope in verse.

We wish to know what ideas have made him popular. Here the astonishment of a Frenchman redoubles. We vainly turn over the pages of his *Dictionary*, his eight volumes of essays, his ten volumes of biographies, his numberless articles, his conversation so carefully collected; we yawn. His truths are too true; we already knew his precepts by heart. We learn from him that life is short, and we ought to improve the few moments accorded to us;[2] that a mother ought not to bring up her son as a dandy; that a man ought to repent of his crimes, and yet avoid superstition; that in everything we ought to be active, and not hurried. We thank him for these sage counsels, but we mutter to ourselves that we could have done very well without them. We should like to know who could have been the lovers of *ennui* who have bought up thirteen thousand copies. We then remember that sermons are liked in England, and that these *Essays* are sermons. We discover that men of reflection do not need bold or striking ideas, but palpable and profitable truths. They demand to be furnished with a useful provision of authentic documents on man and his existence, and demand nothing more. No matter if the idea is vulgar; meat and bread are vulgar too, and are no less good. They wish to be taught the kinds and degrees of happiness and unhappiness, the varieties and results of characters and conditions, the advantages and inconveniences

[1] Here is a celebrated phrase, which will give some idea of his style (Boswell's *Journal*, ch. xliii. 381): 'We were now treading that illustrious island, which was once the luminary of the Caledonian regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish if it were possible. . . . Far from me and from my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.'

[2] *Rambler*, 108, 109, 110, 111.

of town and country, knowledge and ignorance, wealth and poverty, because they are moralists and utilitarians; because they look in a book for the knowledge to turn them from folly, and motives to confirm them in uprightness; because they cultivate in themselves sense, that is to say, practical reason. A little fiction, a few portraits, the least amount of amusement, will suffice to adorn it. This substantial food only needs a very simple seasoning. It is not the novelty of the dishes, nor dainty cookery, but solidity and wholesomeness, which they seek. For this reason the *Essays* are a national food. It is because they are insipid and dull for us that they suit the taste of an Englishman. We understand now why they take for a favourite the respectable, the unbearable Samuel Johnson.

I would fain bring together all these features, see these figures; only colours and forms complete an idea; to know, we must see. Let us go to the print-room. Hogarth, the national painter, the friend of Fielding, the contemporary of Johnson, the exact imitator of manners, will show us the externals, as these authors have shown us the internals.

We enter these great archives of art. Painting is a noble thing! It embellishes all, even vice. On the four walls, under transparent and brilliant glass, the torsos rise, flesh palpitates, the blood's warm dew circulates under the veined skin, speaking likenesses stand out in the light; it seems that the ugly, the vulgar, the odious, have disappeared from the world. I no more criticise characters; I have done with moral rules. I am no longer tempted to approve or to hate. A man here is but a smudge of colour, at most a handful of muscles; I know no longer if he be a murderer.

Life, the happy, complete, overflowing display, the expansion of natural and corporal powers; this from all sides floods and rejoices our eyes. Our limbs instinctively move by contagious imitation of movements and forms. Before these lions of Rubens, whose deep growls rise like thunder to the mouth of the cave, before these colossal contorting torsos, these snouts which grope about skulls, the animal in us quivers through sympathy, and it seems as if we were about to emit from our chests a roar to equal their own.

What though art has degenerated, even amongst Frenchmen, epigrammatists, the bepowdered abbés of the eighteenth century, it is art still. Beauty is gone, gracefulness remains. These pretty arch faces, these slender waspish waists, these delicate arms buried in a nest of lace, these careless wanderings amongst thickets and warbling fountains, these gallant dreams in a lofty chamber festooned with garlands, all this refined and coquettish society is still charming. The artist, then as always, gathers the flower of things, recks not of the rest.

But Hogarth, what did he mean? who ever saw such a painter? Is he a painter? Others make us wish to see what they represent; he makes us wish not to see it.

Nothing can be more agreeable to paint than a drunken debauch

by night; the jolly, careless faces; the rich light, drowned in shadows which flicker over rumpled garments and weighed-down bodies. With Hogarth, on the other hand, what figures! Wickedness, stupidity, all the vile poison of the vilest human passions, drops and distils from them. One is shaking on his legs as he stands, sick, whilst a hiccup half opens his belching lips; another howls hoarsely, like a wretched cur; another, with bald and broken head, patched up in places, falls forward on his chest, with the smile of a sick idiot. We turn over the leaves of Hogarth's works, and the train of odious or beastly faces appears to be inexhaustible; features distorted or deformed, foreheads lumpy or puffed out with perspiring flesh, hideous grins distended by ferocious laughter: one has had his nose bitten off; the next, one-eyed, square-headed, spotted over with bleeding warts, whose red face looks redder under the white wig, smokes silently, full of rancour and spleen; another, an old man with a crutch, scarlet and puffed, his chin falling on his breast, gazes with the fixed and starting eyes of a crab. Hogarth shows the beast in man, and worse, the mad and murderous, the feeble or enraged beast. Look at this murderer standing over the body of his butchered mistress, with squinting eyes, distorted mouth, grinding his teeth at the thought of the blood which stains and denounces him; or this ruined gambler, who has torn off his wig and kerchief, and is crying on his knees, with closed teeth, and fist raised against heaven. Look again at this madhouse: the dirty idiot, with muddy face, filthy hair, stained claws, who thinks he is playing on the violin, and has a sheet of music for a cap; the religious madman, who writhes convulsively on his straw, with clasped hands, feeling the claws of the devil in his bowels; the naked and haggard raving lunatic whom they are chaining up, and who is tearing out his flesh with his nails. Detestable Yahoos that you are, who presume to usurp the blessed light, in what brain can you have arisen, and why did a painter sully his eyes with the sight of you?

It is because his eyes were English, and the senses are barbarous. Let us leave our repugnance behind us, and look at things as Englishmen do, not from without, but from within. The whole current of public thought tends here toward observation of the soul, and painting is dragged along with literature in the same course. Forget then the forms, they are but lines; the body is here only to translate the mind.[1] This twisted nose, these pimples on a vinous cheek, these stupefied gestures of a drowsy brute, these wrinkled features, these degraded forms, only make the character, the trade, the whim, the habit stand out clear. The artist shows us no longer limbs and heads, but debauchery, drunkenness, brutality, hatred, despair, all the diseases

[1] When a character is strongly marked in the living face, it may be considered as an index to the mind, to express which with any degree of justness in painting, requires the utmost efforts of a great master.—*Analysis of Beauty.*

and deformities of these too harsh and hard wills, the mad menagerie of all the passions. Not that he lets them loose; this rude, dogmatic, and Christian citizen handles more vigorously than any of his brethren the heavy club of morality. He is a beef-eating policeman charged with instructing and correcting drunken pugilists. From such a man to such men ceremony is superfluous. At the bottom of every cage where he imprisons a vice, he writes its name and adds the condemnation pronounced by Scripture; he displays that vice in its ugliness, buries it in its filth, drags it to its punishment, so that there is no conscience so perverted as not to recognise it, none so hardened as not to be horrified at it.

Look well, these are lessons which have force. This one is against gin: on a step, in the open street, lies a drunken woman, half naked, with hanging breasts, scrofulous legs; she smiles idiotically, and her child, which she lets fall on the pavement, breaks its skull. Beneath, a pale skeleton, with closed eyes, sinks down with her glass in her hand. Round about, dissipation and frenzy drive the tattered spectres one against another. A wretch who has hung himself sways to and fro in a garret. Gravediggers are putting a naked woman into a coffin. A starveling is gnawing side by side with a dog a bone destitute of meat. By his side a young woman is making her suckling swallow gin. A madman pitchforks his child, and raises it aloft; he dances and laughs, and the mother sees it.

Another picture and lesson, this time against cruelty. A young murderer has been hung, and is being dissected. He is there, on a table, and the lecturer calmly points out with his wand the places where the students are to work. At this sign the dissectors cut the flesh and pull. One is at the feet; the second man of science, a sardonic old butcher, seizes a knife with a hand that looks as if it would do its duty, and thrusts the other hand into the entrails, which, lower down, are being taken out to be put in a bucket. The last medical student takes out the eye, and the distorted mouth seems to howl under his hand. Meanwhile a dog seizes the heart, which is dragging on the ground; thigh-bones and skull boil, by way of concert, in a copper; and the doctors around coolly exchange surgical jokes on the subject which, piecemeal, is passing away under their scalpels.

Frenchmen will say that such lessons are good for barbarians, and that they only half-like these official or lay preachers, De Foe, Hogarth, Smollett, Richardson, Johnson, and the rest. I reply that moralists are useful, and that these have changed a state of barbarism into one of civilisation.

CHAPTER VII.

The Poets.

I. Rule and realm of the classical spirit—Its characters, works, scope, and limits—How it is centred in Pope.

II. Pope—Education—Precocity—Beginnings—Pastoral poems—*Essay on Criticism*—Personal appearance—Mode of life—Character—Mediocrity of his passions and ideas—Largeness of his vanity and talent—Independent fortune and assiduous labour.

III. Epistle of *Eloisa to Abelard*—What the passions become in artificial poetry—*The Rape of the Lock*—Society and the language of society in France and England—Wherein Pope's badinage is painful and displeasing—*The Dunciad*—Obscenity and vulgarities—Wherein the English imagination and drawing-room wit are irreconcilable.

IV. Descriptive talent—Oratorical talent—Didactic poems—Why these poems are the final work of the classical spirit—The *Essay on Man*—His deism and optimism—Value of his conceptions—How they are connected with the dominant style—How they are deformed in Pope's hands—Methods and perfection of his style—Excellence of his portraits—Why they are superior—Translation of the *Iliad*—Change of taste during the past century.

V. Incommensurability of the English mind and the classical decorum—Prior—Gay—Ancient pastoral impossible in northern climates—Moral conception natural in England—Thomson.

VI. Discredit of the drawing-room—Entrance of the man of sensations—Why the return to nature is more precocious in England than in France—Sterne—Richardson—Mackenzie—Macpherson—Gray, Akenside, Beattie, Collins, Young, Shenstone—Persistence of the classical form—Domination of the period—Johnson—The historical school—Robertson, Gibbon, Hume—Their talent and their limits—Beginning of the modern age.

I.

WHEN we take in in one view the vast literary region in England, extending from the restoration of the Stuarts to the French Revolution, we perceive that all the productions, independently of the English character, bear a classical impress, and that this impress, special to this region, is met with neither in the preceding nor in the succeeding time. This dominant form of thought is imposed on all writers from Waller to Johnson, from Hobbes and Temple to Robertson and Hume: there is an art to which they all aspire; the work of a hundred years, practice and theory, inventions and imitations, examples and criticism, are employed in attaining it. They comprehend only one kind of beauty; they estab-

lish only the precepts which may produce it; they re-write, translate, and disfigure on its pattern the great works of other ages; they carry it into all the different kinds of literature, and succeed or fail in them according as it is adapted to them or not. The sway of this style is so absolute, that it is imposed on the greatest, and condemns them to impotence when they would apply it beyond its domain. The possession of this style is so universal, that it is met with in the weakest, and raises them to the height of talent, when they apply it in its domain.[1] This it is which brings to perfection prose, discourse, essay, dissertation, narration, and all the productions which form part of conversation and eloquence. This it is which destroyed the old drama, debased the new, impoverished and diverted poetry, produced a correct, agreeable, sensible, colourless, and concise history. This spirit, common to England and France, impressed its form on the infinite diversity of literary works, so that in its universal manifest ascendency we cannot but recognise the presence of one of those internal forces which bend and govern the course of human genius.

In no branch was it displayed more manifestly than in poetry, and at no time did it appear more clearly than under Queen Anne. The poets have just attained to the art which they had discerned. For sixty years they were approaching it; now they possess it, handle it; already they employ and exaggerate it. The style is at the same time finished and artificial. Open the first that comes to hand, Parnell or Philips, Addison or Prior, Gay or Tickell, you find a certain turn of mind, versification, language. Pass to a second, the same form reappears; you would say that they were imitations one of another. Go on to a third; the same diction, the same apostrophes, the same fashion of arranging an epithet and rounding a period. Turn over the whole lot; with little individual differences, they seem to be all cast in the same mould; one is more epicurean, another more moral, another more biting; but the noble language, the oratorical pomp, the classical correctness, reign throughout; the substantive is accompanied by its adjective, its knight of honour; antithesis balances the symmetrical architecture; the verb, as in Lucan or Statius, is displayed, flanked on each side by a noun decorated by an epithet; one would say that the verse had been fabricated by a machine, so uniform is the make; we forget what it means; we are tempted to count the feet on our fingers; we know beforehand what poetical ornaments are to embellish it. There is a theatrical dressing, contrasts, allusions, mythological elegances, Greek or Latin quotations. There is a scholastic solidity, sententious maxims, philosophic commonplaces, moral developments, oratorical exactness. You might imagine yourself to be before a family of plants; if the size, colour, accessories, names differ, the

[1] P. L. Courier (1772–1825) says, 'a lady's maid, under Louis XIV., wrote better than the greatest of modern writers.'

fundamental type does not vary; the stamens are of the same number, similarly inserted, around similar pistils, above leaves arranged on the same plan; he who knows one knows all; there is a common organism and structure which involves the uniformity of the rest. If you review the whole family, you will doubtless find there some characteristic plant which displays the type in a clear light, whilst next to it and by degrees it alters, degenerates, and at last loses itself in the surrounding families. So here we see classical art find its centre in the neighbours of Pope, and above all in Pope; then, after being half effaced, mingle with foreign elements, until it disappears in the poetry which succeeded it.[1]

II.

In 1688, at the house of a linen draper in Lombard Street, London, was born a little, delicate, and sickly creature, by nature artificial, constituted beforehand for a studious existence, having no taste but for books, who from his early youth derived his whole pleasure from the contemplation of printed books. He copied the letters, and thus learned to write. He passed his infancy with them, and was a verse-maker as soon as he knew how to speak. At the age of twelve he had written a little tragedy out of the *Iliad*, and an *Ode on Solitude*. From thirteen to fifteen he composed a long epic of four thousand verses, called *Alexander*. For eight years shut up in a little house in Windsor Forest, he read all the best critics, almost all the English, Latin, and French poets who have a reputation, Homer, the Greek poets, and a few of the greater ones in the original, Tasso and Ariosto in translations, with such assiduity, that he nearly died from it. He did not search in them for passions, but style: there was never a more devoted adorer, never a more precocious master of form. Already his taste showed itself: amongst all the English poets his favourite was Dryden, the least inspired and the most classical. He perceived his career. He states that Mr. Walsh told him there was one way left of

[1] The Rev. Whitwell Elwin, in his second volume of the *Works of Alexander Pope*, at the end of his introduction to *An Essay on Man*, says, p. 338: 'M. Taine asserts that from the Restoration to the French Revolution, from Waller to Johnson, from Hobbes and Temple to Robertson and Hume, all our literature, both prose and verse, bears the impress of classic art. The mode, he says, culminated in the reign of Queen Anne, and Pope, he considers, was the extreme example of it. . . . Many of the most eminent authors who flourished between the English Restoration wrote in a style far removed from that which M. Taine calls classical. . . . The verse differs like the prose, though in a less degree, and is not "of a uniform make, as if fabricated by a machine." . . . Neither is the substance of the prose and verse, from the Restoration to the French Revolution, an invariable common-sense mediocrity. . . . There is much truth in his (M. Taine's) view, that there was a growing tendency to cultivate style, and in some writers the art degenerated into the artificial.'—TR.

excelling. 'We had several great poets,' he said, 'but we never had one great poet that was correct; and he advised me to make that my study and aim.'[1] He followed this advice, tried his hand in translations of Ovid and Statius, and in recasting parts of old Chaucer. He appropriated all the poetic elegances and excellencies, stored them up in his memory; he arranged in his head the complete dictionary of all happy epithets, all ingenious turns of expression, all sonorous rhythms by which one may exalt, render precise, illuminate an idea. He was like those little musicians, infant prodigies, who, brought up at the piano, suddenly acquire a marvellous touch, roll out scales, brilliant shakes, make the octaves vault with an agility and justice which drive off the stage the most famous artists. At seventeen, becoming acquainted with old Wycherley, who was sixty-nine, he undertook, at his request, to correct his poems, and corrected them so well, that the other was at once charmed and mortified. Pope blotted out, added, recast, spoke frankly, and eliminated firmly. The author, in spite of himself, admired the corrections secretly, and tried openly to make light of them, until at last his vanity, wounded at owing so much to so young a man, and at finding a master in a scholar, ended by breaking off an intercourse by which he profited and suffered too much. For the scholar had at his first step carried the art beyond his master's. At sixteen[2] his Pastorals bore witness to a correctness which no one had possessed, not even Dryden. To read these choice words, these exquisite arrangements of melodious syllables, this science of division and rejection, this style so fluent and pure, these graceful images rendered still more graceful by the diction, and all this artificial and many-tinted garland of flowers which he called pastoral, people thought of the first eclogues of Virgil. Mr. Walsh declared 'that it is not flattery at all to say that Virgil had written nothing so good at his age.'[3] When later they appeared in one volume, the public was dazzled. 'You have only displeased the critics,' wrote Wycherley, 'by pleasing them too well.'[4] The same year the poet of twenty-one finished his *Essay on Criticism*, a sort of *Ars Poetica:* it is the kind of poem a man might write at the end of his career, when he has handled all modes of writing, and has grown grey in criticism; and in this subject, whose treatment demands the experience of a whole literary life, he was in an instant as ripe as Boileau.

This consummate musician, who begins by a treatise on harmony, what will he make of his incomparable mechanism and his professional science? It is well to feel and think before writing; a full source of

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[1] R. Carruthers, *Life of Alexander Pope*, 2d ed. 1857, ch. i. 33.

[2] It is very doubtful whether Pope was not older than sixteen when he wrote the Pastorals. See, on this subject, Pope's Works, ed. Elwin, London 1871, i. 239 *et passim*.—Tr.

[3] Pope's Works, ed. Elwin, i. 233.

[4] *Ibid.* i. 242.

living ideas and candid passions is necessary to make a genuine poet, and in him, seen closely, we find that everything, to his very person, is tricked out and artificial; he was a dwarf, four feet high, contorted, hunchbacked, thin, valetudinarian, appearing, when he arrived at maturity, no longer capable of existing. He could not get up himself, a woman dressed him; he wore three pairs of stockings, drawn on one over the other, so slender were his legs; 'when he rose, he was invested in bodice made of stiff canvas, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat;'[1] next came a sort of fur doublet, for the least thing made him shiver; and lastly, a thick linen shirt, very warm, with fine sleeves. Over all this he wore a black garment, a tye-wig, a little sword; thus equipped, he went and took his place at the table of his great friend, Lord Oxford. He was so small, that he had to be raised on a chair of his own; so bald, that when he had no company he covered his head with a velvet cap; so punctilious and exacting, that the footmen avoided to go his errands, and the Earl had to discharge several 'for their resolute refusal of his messages.' At dinner he ate too much; like a spoiled child, he would have highly seasoned dishes, and thus 'would oppress his stomach with repletion.' When cordials were offered him, he got angry, but did not refuse them. He had all the appetite and whims of an old child, an old invalid, an old author, an old bachelor. You are prepared to find him whimsical and susceptible. He often, without saying a word, and without any known cause, quitted the house of the Earl of Oxford, and the ladies had to go repeatedly with messages to bring him back. If Lady Mary Wortley, his former poetical divinity, were unfortunately at table, there was no dining in peace; they would not fail to contradict, peck at each other, quarrel; and one or other would leave the room. He would be sent for and would return, but he brought his hobbies back with him. He was crafty, malignant, like a nervous abortion as he was; when he wanted anything, he dared not ask for it plainly; with hints and contrivances of speech he induced people to mention it, to bring it forward, after which he would make use of it. 'Thus he teased Lord Orrery till he obtained a screen. He hardly drank tea without a stratagem. Lady Bolingbroke used to say that "he played the politician about cabbages and turnips."'[2]

The rest of his life is not much more noble. He wrote libels on the Duke of Chandos, Aaron Hill, Lady Mary Wortley, and then lied or equivocated to disavow them. He had an ugly liking for artifice, and prepared a disloyal trick against Lord Bolingbroke, his greatest friend. He was never frank, always acting a part; he aped the *blasé* man, the impartial great artist, a contemner of the great, of kings, of poetry itself. The truth is, that he thought of nothing but his phrases,

[1] Johnson, *Lives of the most eminent English Poets*, 3 vols., ed. Cunningham, 1854; A. Pope, iii. 96.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 99.

his author's reputation, and 'a little regard shown him by the Prince of Wales melted his obduracy.'[1] When you read his correspondence, you find that there are not more than about ten genuine letters; he is a literary man even in the moments when he opened his heart; his confidences are formal rhetoric; and when he conversed with a friend he was always thinking of the printer, who would give his effusions to the public. Through his very pretentiousness he grew awkward, and unmasked himself. One day Richardson and his father, the painter, found him reading a pamphlet that Cibber had written against him. 'These things,' said Pope, 'are my diversion.' 'They sat by him while he perused it, and saw his features writhing with anguish; and young Richardson said to his father, when they returned, that he hoped to be preserved from such diversion.'[2] In fine, his great cause for writing was literary vanity; he wished to be admired, and nothing more; his life was that of a coquette studying herself in a glass, bedecking herself, smirking, paying compliments to herself, yet declaring that compliments weary her, that painting the face makes her dirty, and that she has a horror of affectation. Pope has no dash, no naturalness or manliness; no more ideas than passions; at least such ideas as a man feels it necessary to write, and in connection with which we lose thought of words. Religious controversy and party quarrels resound about him; he studiously avoids them; amidst all these shocks his chief care is to preserve his writing-desk; he is a very lukewarm Catholic, all but a deist, not well aware of what deism means; and on this point he borrows from Bolingbroke ideas whose scope he cannot see, but which he thinks suitable to be put into verse. In a letter to Atterbury (1717) he says:

'In my politics, I think no further than how to prefer the peace of my life, in any government under which I live; nor in my religion, than to preserve the peace of my conscience in any church with which I communicate. I hope all churches and governments are so far of God, as they are rightly understood and rightly administered; and where they err, or may be wrong, I leave it to God alone to mend or reform them.'[3]

Such convictions do not torment a man. In reality, he did not write because he thought, but thought in order to write; inky paper, and the noise it makes in the world, was his idol; if he wrote verses, it was merely for the sake of doing so.

This is the best training for versification. Pope gave himself up to it; he was a man of leisure, his father had left him a very fair fortune; he earned a large sum by translating the *Iliad* and *Odyssey;* he had an income of eight hundred pounds. He was never in the pay of a publisher; he looked from an eminence upon the beggarly authors grovelling in their Bohemianism, and, calmly seated in his pretty house at Twickenham, in his grotto, or in the fine garden which he had himself

[1] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ch. lxxi. 670.
[2] Carruthers' *Life of Pope*, ch. x. 377.
[3] *Ibid.* ch. iv. 164.

planned, he could polish and file his writings as long as he chose. He did not fail to do so. When he had written a work, he kept it at least two years in his desk. From time to time he re-read and corrected it; took counsel of his friends, then of his enemies; no new edition was unamended; he moulded without wearying. His first production was so much recast and transformed, that it could not be recognised in the final copy. The pieces which seem least retouched are two satires, and Dodsley says that in the manuscript 'almost every line was written twice over; I gave him a clean transcript, which he sent some time afterwards to me for the press, with almost every line written twice over a second time.'[1] Dr. Johnson says: 'From his attention to poetry he was never diverted. If conversation offered anything that could be improved, he committed it to paper; if a thought, or perhaps an expression, more happy than was common, rose to his mind, he was careful to write it; an independent distich was preserved for an opportunity of insertion; and some little fragments have been found containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought upon at some other time.'[2] His writing-box had to be placed upon his bed before he rose. 'Lord Oxford's domestic related that, in the dreadful winter of 1740, she was called from her bed by him four times in one night to supply him with paper, lest he should lose a thought.'[3] Swift complains that he was never at leisure for conversation, because he 'had always some poetical scheme in his head.' Thus nothing was lacking for the attainment of perfect expression; the practice of a lifetime, the study of every model, independent fortune, the company of men of the world, freedom from turbulent passions, the absence of dominant ideas, the facility of an infant prodigy, the assiduity of an old man of letters. It seems as though he were expressly endowed with faults and good qualities, here enriched, there impoverished, at once narrowed and developed, to set in relief the classical form by the diminution of the classical depth, to present the public with a model of a well-used and accomplished art, to reduce to a brilliant and rigid crystal the flowing sap of an expiring literature.

III.

It is a great misfortune for a poet to know his business too well; his poetry then shows a man of business, and not the poet. I wish I could admire Pope's works of imagination, but I cannot. In vain I read the testimony of his contemporaries, and even that of the moderns, and repeat to myself that in his time he was the prince of poets; that his Epistle from *Eloisa to Abelard* was received with a cry of enthusiasm; that one could not then imagine a finer expression of true poetry; that to this day it is learned by heart, like the speech of Hippolyte in the *Phèdre* of Racine; that Johnson, that great literary critic, ranked it

[1] Johnson, *The Lives of the English Poets*; Alexander Pope, iii. 114.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 111. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 105.

amongst 'the happiest productions of the human mind;' that Lord Byron himself preferred it to the celebrated ode of Sappho. I read it again, and am bored: this is not as it ought to be; but, in spite of myself, I yawn, and I open the original letters of Eloisa to find the cause of my weariness.

Doubtless poor Eloisa is a barbarian, nay worse, a literary barbarian; she makes learned quotations, arguments, tries to imitate Cicero, to arrange her periods; she could not do otherwise, writing a dead language, with an acquired style; perhaps the reader would do as much if he were obliged to write to his mistress in Latin.[1] But how the true sentiment pierces through the scholastic form!

'Thou art the only one who can sadden me, console me, make me joyful. . . . I should be happier and prouder to be called thy mistress than to be the lawful wife of an emperor. . . . Never, God knows it, have I wished for anything else in thee but thee. It is thee alone whom I desire; nothing that thou couldst give; it is not a marriage, a dowry: I never dreamt of doing my pleasure or my will, thou knowest it, but thine.'

Then come passionate words, genuine love words,[2] then the candid words of a penitent, who says and dares everything, because she wishes to be cured, to show her wound to her confessor, even her most shameful wound; perhaps also because in extreme agony, as in childbirth, modesty vanishes. All this is very crude, very rude; Pope has more wit than she, and how he endues her with it! In his hands she becomes an academician, and her letter is a repertory of literary effects. Portraits and descriptions; she paints to Abelard the nunnery and the landscape:

'In these lone walls (their days eternal bound),
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crowned,
Where awful arches make a noon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light. . . .
The wandering streams that shine between the hills,
The grots that echo to the tinkling rills,
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze.'[3]

Declamation and commonplace: she sends Abelard discourses on love and the liberty which it demands, on the cloister and the peaceful life

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[1] Rev. W. Elwin, in his edition of Pope's Works, ii. 224, says: 'The authenticity of the Latin letters has usually been taken for granted, but I have a strong belief that they are a forgery. . . . It is far more likely that they are the fabrication of an unconcerned romancer, who speaks in the name of others with a latitude which people, not entirely degraded, would never adopt towards themselves. The suspicion is strengthened when the second party to the correspondence, the chief philosopher of his generation, exhibits the same exceptional depravity of taste.'—TR.

[2] 'Vale, unice.'

[3] Pope's Works, ed. Elwin; *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 245, *v.* 141–160.

which it affords, on writing and the advantages of the post.[1] Antitheses and contrasts, she forwards them to Abelard by the dozen; a contrast between the convent illuminated by his presence and desolate by his absence, between the tranquillity of the pure nun and the anxiety of the culpable nun, between the dream of human happiness and the dream of divine happiness. In fine, it is a *bravura*, with contrasts of *forte* and *piano*, variations and change of key. Eloisa makes the most of her theme, and sets herself to crowd into it all the powers and effects of her voice. Admire the *crescendo*, the shakes by which she ends her brilliant *morceaux;* to transport the hearer at the close of the portrait of the innocent nun, she says:

'How happy is the blameless vestal's lot!
The world forgetting, by the world forgot:
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind!
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resigned
Labour and rest, that equal periods keep;
"Obedient slumbers that can wake and weep;"
Desires composed, affections ever even;
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heav'n.
Grace shines around her, with serenest beams,
And whisp'ring angels prompt her golden dreams.
For her, th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes,
For her the spouse prepares the bridal ring,
For her white virgins hymeneals sing,
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day.'[2]

Observe the noise of the big drum, I mean the grand contrivances, for so may be called all that a person says who wishes to rave and cannot; for instance, speaking to rocks and walls, praying the absent Abelard to come, fancying him present, apostrophising grace and virtue:

'Oh grace serene! Oh virtue heavenly fair!
Divine oblivion of low-thoughted care!
Fresh-blooming hope, gay daughter of the sky!
And faith, our early immortality!
Enter, each mild, each amicable guest;
Receive, and wrap me in eternal rest!'[3]

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[1] *Eloisa to Abelard*, ii. 240, *v.* 51–58:

'Heav'n first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banished lover, or some captive maid;
They live, they speak, they breathe what love inspires,
Warm from the soul, and faithful to its fires,
The virgin's wish without her fears impart,
Excuse the blush, and pour out all the heart,
Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul,
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.'

[2] *Ibid.* 249, *v.* 207–222. [3] *Ibid.* 254, *v.* 297–302.

Hearing the dead speaking to her, telling the angels:

> 'I come! I come! Prepare your roseate bow'rs,
> Celestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs.'[1]

This is the final symphony with modulations of the celestial organ. I suppose that Abelard cries 'Bravo' when he hears it.

But this is nothing in comparison with the art exhibited by her in every phrase. She puts ornaments into every line. Imagine an Italian singer trilling every word. O what pretty sounds! how nimbly and brilliantly they roll along, how clear, and always exquisite! it is impossible to reproduce them in another tongue. Now it is a happy image, filling up a whole phrase; now a series of verses, full of symmetrical contrasts; two ordinary words set in relief by strange conjunction; an imitative rhythm completing the impression of the mind by the emotion of the senses; the most elegant comparisons and the most picturesque epithets; the closest style and the most ornate. Except truth, nothing is wanting. Eloisa is worse than a singer, she is an author: we look at the back of her epistle to Abelard to see if she has not written 'For Press.'

Pope has somewhere given a receipt for making an epic poem: take a storm, a dream, five or six battles, three sacrifices, funereal games, a dozen gods in two divisions; shake together until there rises the froth of a lofty style. You have just seen the receipt for making a love-letter. This kind of poetry resembles cookery; neither heart nor genius is necessary to produce it, but a light hand, an attentive eye, and a cultivated taste.

It seems that this kind of talent is made for light verses. It is factitious, and so are the manners of society. To make pretty speeches, to prattle with ladies, to speak elegantly of their chocolate or their fan, to jeer at fools, to criticise the last tragedy, to be good at compliments or epigrams,—this, it seems, is the natural employment of a mind such as this, but slightly impassioned, very vain, a perfect master of style, as careful of his verses as a dandy of his coat. Pope wrote the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Dunciad;* his contemporaries went into ecstasies on the charm of his badinage and the exactness of his raillery, and believed that he had surpassed Boileau's *Lutrin* and *Satires.*

That may well be; at all events the praise would be scanty. In Boileau there are, as a rule, two kinds of verse, as was said by a man of wit;[2] most of which seem to be those of a sharp schoolboy in the third class, the rest those of a good schoolboy in the upper division. Boileau wrote the second verse before the first; this is why once out of four times his first verse only serves to stop a gap. Doubtless Pope had a more brilliant and adroit mechanism; but this facility of hand does not suffice to make a poet, even a poet of the boudoir. There, as elsewhere, we need genuine passions, or at least genuine tastes. When we wish to

[1] *Eloisa to Abelard,* ii. 255, *v.* 317.

[2] M. Guillaume Guizot.

paint the pretty nothings of conversation and the world, we must like them. We can only paint well what we love.[1] Is there no charming grace in the prattle and frivolity of a pretty woman? Painters, like Watteau, have spent their lives in feasting on them. A lock of hair which is lifted up, a pretty arm peeping from underneath a great deal of lace, a stooping figure making the bright folds of a petticoat sparkle, and the arch, half-engaging, half-mocking smile of the pouting mouth,—these are enough to transport an artist. Certainly he will be aware of the influence of the toilet, as much so as the lady herself, and will never scold her for passing three hours at her glass; there is poetry in elegance. He enjoys it as a picture; enjoys the refinements of worldly life, the long quiet lines of the lofty, wainscoted drawing-room, the soft reflection of the high mirrors and glittering porcelain, the careless gaiety of the little sculptured Loves, locked in embrace above the mantelpiece, the silvery sound of these soft voices, buzzing scandal round the tea-table. Pope hardly, if at all, rejoices in them; he is satirical and English amidst this amiable luxury, introduced from France. Although he is the most worldly of English poets, he is not enough so; nor is the society around him. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who was in her time 'the pink of fashion,' and who is compared to Madame de Sévigné, has such a serious mind, such a decided style, such a precise judgment, and such a harsh sarcasm, that you would take her for a man. In fine, the English, even Lord Chesterfield and Horace Walpole, never mastered the true tone of the *salon*. Pope is like them; his voice thunders, and then suddenly becomes biting. Every instant a harsh mockery blots out the graceful images, which he began to arouse. Consider *The Rape of the Lock* as a whole; it is a buffoonery in a noble style. Lord Petre had cut off a lock of hair of a fashionable beauty, Mrs. Arabella Fermor; out of this trifle the problem is to make an epic, with invocations, apostrophes, the intervention of supernatural beings, and the rest of poetic mechanism; the solemnity of style contrasts with the littleness of the events; we laugh at these bickerings as at an insect's quarrel. Such has always been the case in this country; whenever Englishmen wish to represent social life, it is with an external and assumed politeness; at the bottom of their admiration there is scorn. Their insipid compliments conceal a mental reservation; observe them well, and you will see that they look upon a pretty, well-dressed, and coquettish woman as a pink doll, fit to amuse people for half an hour, by her outward show. Pope dedicates his poem to Mistress Arabella Fermor with every kind of compliment. The truth is, he is not polite; a Frenchwoman would have sent him back his book, and advised him to learn manners; for one commendation of her beauty she would find ten sarcasms upon her frivolity. Is it very pleasant to have it said to

[1] Goethe sings—'Liebe sei vor allen Dingen,
Unser Thema, wenn wir singen.'

one: 'You have the prettiest eyes in the world, but you live in the pursuit of trifles?' Yet to this all his homage is reduced.[1] His complimentary emphasis, his declaration that the 'ravish'd hair . . . adds new glory to the shining sphere,'[2] all his stock of phrases is but a parade of gallantry which betrays indelicacy and grossness. Will she

> 'Stain her honour, or her new brocade,
> Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade,
> Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball?'[3]

No Frenchman of the eighteenth century would have imagined such a compliment. At most, that bearish Rousseau, that former lackey and Geneva moralist, might have delivered this disagreeable thrust. In England it was not found too rude. Mrs. Arabella Fermor was so pleased with the poem, that she gave about copies of it. Clearly she was not hard to please, for she had heard much worse compliments. If you read in Swift the literal transcript of a fashionable conversation, you will see that a woman of fashion of that time could endure much before she was angry.

But the strangest thing is, that this badinage is, for Frenchmen at least, no badinage at all. It is not all like lightness or gaiety. Dorat, Gresset, would have been stupefied and shocked by it. We remain cold under its most brilliant hits. Now and then at most a crack of the whip arouses us, but not to laughter. These caricatures seem strange to us, but do not amuse. The wit is no wit; all is calculated, combined, artificially prepared; we expect flashes of lightning, but at the last moment they do not descend. Thus Lord Petre, to 'implore propitious heaven, and every power,'

> 'To Love an altar built
> Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt.
> There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves,
> And all the trophies of his former loves;
> With tender billets-doux he lights the pyre,
> And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire.'[4]

We remain disappointed, not seeing the comicality of the description. We go on conscientiously, and in the picture of Melancholy and her palace find figures very strange after another fashion:

> 'Here sighs a jar, and there a goose-pye talks;
> Men prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works,
> And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks.'[5]

We tell ourselves now that we are in China; that so far from Paris

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[1] See his *Epistle of the Characters of Women*. According to Pope, this character is composed of love of pleasure and love of power.

[2] *Rape of the Lock*, c. v. 181, *v.* 141.

[3] *Ibid.* c. ii. 156, *v.* 107.

[4] *Ibid.* c. ii. 153, *v.* 37–42.

[5] *Ibid.* c. iv. 169, *v.* 52.

and Voltaire we must be surprised at nothing, that these folk have ears different from ours, and that a Pekin mandarin vastly relishes a concert of kettles. Finally, we comprehend that, even in this correct age and this artificial poetry, the old imagination exists; that it is nourished, as before, by oddities and contrasts; and that taste, in spite of all culture, will never become acclimatised; that incongruities, far from shocking, delight it; that it is insensible to French sweetness and refinements; that it needs a succession of expressive figures, unexpected and grinning, to pass before it; that it prefers this coarse carnival to delicate insinuations; that Pope belongs to his country, in spite of his classical polish and his studied elegances, and that his unpleasing and vigorous fancy is akin to that of Swift.

We are now prepared and can enter upon his second poem, *The Dunciad.* We need much self-command not to throw down this masterpiece as insipid, and even disgusting. Rarely has so much talent been spent to produce greater tedium. Pope wished to be avenged on his literary enemies, and sang of Dulness, the sublime goddess of literature, 'daughter of Chaos and eternal Night, . . . gross as her sire, and as her mother grave,'[1] queen of hungry authors, who chooses for her son and favourite Cibber. There he is, a king, and to celebrate his accession she institutes public games in imitation of the ancients; first a race of booksellers, trying to seize a poet; then the struggle of the authors, who first vie with each other in braying, and then dash into the Fleet-ditch filth; then the strife of critics, who have to undergo the reading of two voluminous authors without falling asleep.[2] Strange paradise, to be sure, and in truth not very striking. Who is not deafened by these hackneyed and bald allegories, Dulness, poppies, mists, and Sleep? What if I entered into details, and described the poetess offered for a prize, 'with cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes;' if I related the plunges of the authors, floundering in the Fleet-ditch, the vilest sewer in the town; if I transcribed all the extraordinary verses, in which

> 'First he relates, how sinking to the chin,
> Smit with his mien, the mud-nymphs suck'd him in:
> How young Lutetia, softer than the down,
> Nigrina black, and Merdamante brown,
> Vied for his love in jetty bow'rs below.' . . .[3]

I must stop. Some passages, for instance that on the fall of Curl, Swift alone might have seemed capable of writing; we might have excused it in Swift; the extremity of despair, the rage of misanthropy, the approach of madness, might have carried him to such excess. But Pope, who lived calm and admired in his villa, and who was only urged by literary rancour! He can have had no nerves! How could a poet have dragged his talent wantonly through such images, and so con-

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[1] Pope's Works, *The Dunciad,* bk. i. [2] *Ibid.* bk. ii.
[3] *Ibid.*

strained his ingeniously woven verses to receive such dirt? Picture a pretty drawing-room basket, destined only to contain flowers and fancy-work, sent down to the kitchen to be turned into a receptacle for filth. In fact, all the filth of literary life is here; and heaven knows what it then was! In no age were hack-writers so beggarly and more vile. Poor fellows, like Richard Savage, who slept during one winter in the open air on the cinders of a glass manufactory, lived on what he received for a dedication, knew the inside of a prison, rarely dined, and drank at the expense of his friends; pamphleteers like Tutchin, who was soundly whipped; plagiarists like Ward, exposed in the pillory and pelted with rotten eggs and apples; courtesans like Eliza Heywood, notorious by the shamelessness of their public confessions; bought journalists, hired slanderers, vendors of scandal and insults, half-rogues, complete roysterers, and all the literary vermin which haunted the gambling-houses, the stews, the gin-cellars, and at a sign from a book-seller stung honest folk for a crown. These villanies, foul linen, the greasy coat six years old, musty pudding, and the rest, are in Pope as in Hogarth, with English crudity and preciseness. This is their fault, they are realists, even under the classical wig; they do not disguise what is ugly and mean; they describe that ugliness and meanness with their exact outlines and distinguishing marks; they do not clothe them in a fine cloak of general ideas; they do not cover them with the pretty innuendoes of society. This is the reason why their satires are so harsh. Pope does not flog the dunces, he knocks them down; his poem is truly hard and mischievous; it is so much so, that it becomes clumsy: to add to the punishment of dunces, he begins at the deluge, writes historical passages, represents at length the past, present, and future empire of Dulness, the library of Alexandria burned by Omar, learning extinguished by the invasion of the barbarians and by the superstition of the middle-age, the empire of stupidity which extends over England and will swallow it up. What paving-stones to crush flies!

> 'See skulking Truth to her old cavern fled,
> Mountains of casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
> Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
> Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
> Physic of Metaphysic begs defence,
> And Metaphysic calls for aid on sense! . . .
> Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
> And unawares Morality expires.
> Nor public flame, nor private, dares to shine;
> Nor human spark is left, nor glimpse divine!
> Lo! thy dread empire, Chaos! is restored;
> Light dies before thy uncreating word:
> Thy hand, great anarch! lets the curtain fall;
> And universal darkness buries all.'[1]

[1] *The Dunciad*, the end.

The last scene ends with noise, cymbals and trombones, crackers and fireworks. For me, I carry away from this celebrated entertainment only the remembrance of a hubbub. Unwittingly I have counted the lights, I know the machinery, I have touched the toilsome stage-property of apparitions and allegories. I bid farewell to the scene painter, the machinist, the manager of literary effects, and go elsewhere to find the poet.

IV.

There is, however, a poet in Pope, and to discover him we have only to read him by fragments; if the whole is, as a rule, wearisome or shocking, the details are admirable. It is so at the end of all literary ages. Pliny the younger, and Seneca, so affected and so inflated, are charming in small bits; each of their phrases, taken by itself, is a masterpiece; each verse in Pope is a masterpiece when taken alone. At this time, and after a hundred years of culture, there is no movement, no object, no action, which poets cannot describe. Every aspect of nature was observed; a sunrise, a landscape reflected in the water,[1] a breeze amid the foliage, and so forth. Ask Pope to paint in verse an eel, a perch, or a trout; he has the exact phrase ready; you might glean from him the contents of a 'Gradus.' He gives the features so exactly, that at once you think you see the thing; he gives the expression so copiously, that your imagination, however obtuse, will end by seeing it. He marks everything in the flight of a pheasant:

> 'See! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs
> And mounts exulting on triumphant wings. . . .
> Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,
> His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
> The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
> His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?'[2]

He possesses the richest store of words to depict the sylphs which flutter round his heroine Belinda:

> 'But now secure the painted vessel glides,
> The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:
> While melting music steals upon the sky,
> And softened sounds along the waters die;
> Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play, . . .
> The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:
> Soft o'er the shrouds the aërial whispers breathe,
> That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.

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[1] Pope's Works, i. 352; *Windsor Forest*, *v.* 211.

> 'Oft in her glass the musing shepherd spies
> The headlong mountains and the downward skies,
> The wat'ry landscape of the pendant woods,
> And absent trees that tremble in the floods.'

[2] *Ibid.* 347, *v.* 111–118.

Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garment flew,
Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
While ev'ry beam new transient colours flings,
Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.'[1]

Doubtless these are not Shakspeare's sylphs; but side by side with a natural and living rose, we may still look with pleasure on a flower of diamonds, as they come from the hand of the jeweller, a masterpiece of art and patience, whose facets make the light glitter, and cast a shower of sparkles over the filagree foliage in which they are embedded. A score of times in a poem of Pope's we stop to look with wonder on one of these literary adornments. He feels so well in which the strong point of his talent lies, that he abuses it; he delights to show his skill. What can be staler than a card party, or more repellent of poetry than the queen of spades or the king of hearts? Yet, doubtless for a wager, he has recorded in the *Rape of the Lock* a game of ombre; we follow it, hear it, recognise the dresses:

'Behold, four kings, in majesty revered,
With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;
And four fair queens whose hands sustain a flow'r,
Th' expressive emblem of their softer power;
Four knaves in garb succinct, a trusty band;
Caps on their heads, and halberts in their hand;
And parti-coloured troops, a shining train,
Drawn forth to combat on the velvet plain.'[2]

We see the trumps, the cuts, the tricks, and instantly afterwards the coffee, the china, the spoons, the fiery spirits (to wit, spirits of wine); we have here in advance the modes and periphrases of Delille. The celebrated verses in which Delille at once employs and describes imitative harmony, are translated from Pope.[3] It is an expiring poetry, but poetry still: an ornament to put on a mantelpiece is an inferior work of art, but still it is a work of art.

To descriptive talent Pope unites oratorical talent. This art, proper to the classical age, is the art of expressing mediocre general ideas. For a hundred and fifty years men of both the thinking countries, England and France, employed herein all their studies. They seized these universal and limited truths, which, being situated between lofty philo-

[1] Pope's Works, ii. 154; *The Rape of the Lock*, c. 2, *v.* 47–68.
[2] *Ibid.* c. 3, 160, *v.* 37–44.
[3] 'Peins-moi légèrement l'amant léger de Flore,
Qu'un doux ruisseau murmure en vers plus doux encore,' etc.

sophical abstractions and petty sensible details, are the subject-matter of eloquence and rhetoric, and form what we now-a-days call commonplaces. They arranged them in compartments; methodically developed them; made them obvious by grouping and symmetry; disposed them in regular successions, which with dignity and majesty advance under discipline, and in a body. The influence of this oratorical reason became so great, that it was imposed on poetry itself. Buffon ends by saying, in praise of verses, that they are as fine as fine prose. In fact, poetry at this time became a more affected prose subjected to rhyme. It was only a kind of higher conversation and more select discourse. It is found powerless when it is necessary to paint or represent an action, when the need is to see and make visible living passions, large genuine emotions, men of flesh and blood; it results only in college epics like the *Henriade*, freezing odes and tragedies like those of Voltaire and Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, or those of Addison, Thomson, Johnson, and the rest. It makes them up of dissertations, because it is capable of nothing else but dissertations. Here henceforth is its domain; and its final task is the didactic poem, which is a dissertation in verse. Pope excelled in it, and his most perfect poems are those made up of precepts and arguments. Artifice in these is less shocking than elsewhere. A poem—I am wrong, essays like his upon *Criticism*, on *Man*, and the *Government of Providence*, on the *Knowledge and Characters of Men*, deserve to be written after reflection; they are a study, and almost a scientific monograph. We may, we even ought, to weigh all the words, and verify all the connections: art and attention are not superfluous; the question concerns exact precepts and close arguments. In this Pope is incomparable. I do not think that there is in the world a versified prose like his; that of Boileau does not approach it. Not that its ideas are very worthy of attention; we have worn them out, they interest us no longer. The *Essay on Criticism* resembles Boileau's *Epîtres* and *L'Art Poétique*, excellent works, no longer read but in classes at school. It is a collection of very wise precepts, whose only fault is their being too true. To say that good taste is rare; that we ought to reflect and be instructed before deciding; that the rules of art are drawn from nature; that pride, ignorance, prejudice, partiality, envy, pervert our judgment; that a criticism should be sincere, modest, polished, kindly,—all these truths might then be discoveries, but not so now. I suppose that, at the time of Pope, Dryden, and Boileau, men had special need of setting their ideas in order, and of seeing them very clearly in very clear phrases. Now that this need is satisfied, it has disappeared: we demand ideas, not arrangement of ideas; the pigeonholes are manufactured, fill them. Pope was obliged to do it once in the *Essay on Man*, which is a sort of *Vicaire Savoyard*,[1] less original

[1] A tale of J. J. Rousseau, in which he tries to depict a philosophical clergyman.—TR.

than the other. He shows that God made all for the best, that man is limited in his capacity and ought not to judge God, that our passions and imperfections serve for the general good and for the ends of Providence, that happiness lies in virtue and submission to the divine will. You recognise here a sort of deism and optimism, of which there was much at that time, borrowed, like those of Rousseau, from the *Theodicea* of Leibnitz, but tempered, toned down, and arranged for the use of honest people. The conception is not very lofty: this curtailed deity, making his appearance at the beginning of the eighteenth century, is but a residuum: religion being extinguished, he remained at the bottom of the crucible; and the reasoners of the time, having no metaphysical inventiveness, kept him in their system to stop a gap. In this state and at this place this deity resembles classic verse. He has an imposing appearance, is comprehended easily, is stripped of efficacy, is the product of cold argumentative reason, and leaves the people who attend to him, very much at ease; on all these accounts he is akin to an Alexandrine. This poor conception is all the more wretched in Pope from not belonging to him, for he is only accidentally a philosopher; and to find matter for his poem, three or four systems, deformed and attenuated, are amalgamated in his work. He boasts of having tempered them one with the other, and having 'steered between the extremes.'[1] The truth is, that he did not understand them, and that he jumbles incongruous ideas at every step. There is a passage in which, to obtain an effect of style, he becomes a pantheist; moreover, he is bombastic, and assumes the supercilious, imperious tone of a young doctor. I find no individual invention except in his *Moral Essays;* in them is a theory of dominant passion which is worth reading. After all, he went farther than Boileau, for instance, in the knowledge of man. Psychology is indigenous in England; we meet it there throughout, even in the least creative minds. It gives rise to the novel, dispossesses philosophy, produces the essay, appears in the newspapers, fills current literature, like those indigenous plants which multiply on every soil.

But if the ideas are mediocre, the art of expressing them is truly marvellous: marvellous is the word. 'I chose verse,' says Pope in his *Design of an Essay on Man*, 'because I found I could express them (ideas) more shortly this way than in prose itself.' In fact, every word is effective: every passage must be read slowly; every epithet is an epitome; a more condensed style was never written; and, on the other hand, no one laboured more skilfully in introducing philosophical formulas into the current conversation of society. His maxims have become proverbs. I open his *Essay on Man* at random, and fall upon the beginning of his second book. An orator, an author of the school of Buffon, would be transported with admiration to see so many literary treasures collected in so small a space:

[1] These words are taken from the *Design of an Essay on Man.*

'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state.
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little or too much;
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused, or disabused;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled,
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world.'[1]

The first verse epitomises the whole of the preceding book, and the second epitomises the present one; it is, as it were, a kind of staircase leading from temple to temple, regularly composed of symmetrical steps, so aptly disposed that from the first step we see at a glance the whole building we have left, and from the second the whole edifice we are about to visit. Have you ever seen a finer entrance, or one more conformable to the rules which bid us unite our ideas, recall them when developed, pre-announce them when not yet developed? But this is not enough. After this brief announcement, which premises that he is about to treat of human nature, a longer announcement is necessary, to paint in advance, with the greatest possible splendour, this human nature of which he is about to treat. This is the proper oratorical exordium, like those which Bossuet sets at the beginning of his funeral orations; a sort of elaborate portico to receive the audience on their entrance, and prepare them for the magnificence of the temple. Couple by couple the antitheses follow each other like a succession of columns; thirteen couples form a suite; and the last is raised above the rest by a word, which concentrates and combines all. In other hands this prolongation of the same form would become tedious; in Pope's it interests us, so much variety is there in the arrangement and the adornments. In one place the antithesis is comprised in a single line, in another it occupies two; now it is in the substantives, now in the adjectives and verbs; now only in the ideas, now it penetrates the sound and position of the words. In vain we see it reappear; we are not wearied, because each time it adds somewhat to our idea, and shows us the object in a new light. This object itself may be abstract, obscure, unpleasant, opposed to poetry; the style spreads over it its own light; noble images borrowed from the grand and simple spectacles of nature, illustrate and adorn it.

[1] Pope's Works, ii.; *An Essay on Man*, Ep. ii. 375, *v.* 1–18.

For there is a classical architecture of ideas as well as of stones: the first like the second, is a friend to clearness and regularity, majesty and calm; like the second, it was invented in Greece, transmitted through Rome to France, through France to England, and slightly altered in its passage. Of all the masters who have practised it in England, Pope is the most skilled.

If Pope's arguments were written in prose, the reader would hardly be moved by them; he would instinctively think of Pascal's book, and remark upon the astonishing difference between a versifier and a man. A good epitome, a good bit of style, well worked out, well written, he would say, and nothing further. Clearly the beauty of the verses arose from the difficulty overcome, the chosen sounds, the symmetrical rhythms; this was all, and it was not much. A great writer is a man who, having passions, knows his dictionary and grammar; Pope thoroughly knew his dictionary and his grammar, but stopped there.

People will say that this merit is small, and that I do not inspire them with a desire to read Pope's verses. True; at least I do not counsel them to read many. I would add, however, by way of excuse, that there is a kind in which he succeeds, that his descriptive and oratorical talents find in portraiture matter which suits them, and that in this he frequently approaches La Bruyère; that several of his portraits, those of Addison, Lord Hervey, Lord Wharton, the Duchess of Marlborough, are medals worthy of finding a place in the cabinet of the curious, and of remaining in the archives of the human race; that when he chisels one of these heads, the abbreviative images, the unlooked-for connections of words, the sustained and multiplied contrasts, the perpetual and extraordinary conciseness, the incessant and increasing impulse of all the strokes of eloquence combined upon the same spot, stamp upon the memory an impress which we never forget. It is better to repudiate these partial apologies, and frankly to avow that, on the whole, this great poet, the glory of his age, is wearisome, wearisome to us. 'A woman of forty,' says Stendhal, 'is only beautiful to those who have loved her in their youth.' The poor muse in question is not forty years old for us; she is a hundred and forty. Let us remember, when we wish to judge her fairly, the time when we made French verses like our Latin verse. The taste has been transformed an age ago, for the human mind has wheeled round; with the prospect the perspective has changed; we must take this displacement into account. Now-a-days we demand new ideas and bare sentiments; we care no longer for the clothing, we want the thing. Exordium, transitions, peculiarities of style, elegances of expression, the whole literary wardrobe, is sent to the old-clothes shop; we only keep what is indispensable: we trouble ourselves no more about adornment, but about truth. The men of the preceding century were quite different. This was seen when Pope translated the *Iliad;* it was the *Iliad* written in the style of the *Henriade:* by virtue of this travesty the public admired

it. They would not have admired it in the simple Greek guise; they only consented to see it in powder and ribbons. It was the costume of the time, and it was very necessary to put it on. Dr. Johnson in his commercial and academical style affirms even that the demand for elegance had increased so much, that pure nature could no longer be borne.

Good society and men of letters made a little world by themselves, which had been formed and refined after the manner and ideas of France. They had taken a correct and noble style at the same time as fashion and fine manners. They held by this style as by their coat; it was a matter of propriety or ceremony; there was an accepted and unalterable pattern; they could not change it without indecency or ridicule: to write, not according to the rules, especially in verse, effusively and naturally, would have been like showing oneself in the drawing-room in slippers and a dressing-gown. Their pleasure in reading verse was to try whether the pattern had been exactly followed, originality was only permitted in details; you might adjust here a lace, there some band, but you were bound scrupulously to preserve the conventional form, to brush everything minutely, and never to appear without new gold lace and glossy broadcloth. The attention was only bestowed on refinements; a more elaborate braid, a more brilliant velvet, a feather more gracefully arranged; to this were boldness and experiment reduced; the smallest incorrectness, the slightest incongruity, would have offended their eyes; they perfected the infinitely little. Men of letters acted like these coquettes, for whom the superb goddesses of Michael Angelo and Rubens are but milkmaids, but who utter a cry of pleasure at the sight of a ribbon at twenty francs a yard. A division, a displacing of verses, a metaphor delighted them, and this was all which could still transport them. They went on day by day embroidering, bedizening, narrowing the bright classic robe, until at last the human mind, feeling fettered, tore it, cast it away, and began to move. Now that this robe is on the ground the critics pick it up, hang it up in their museums, so that everybody can see it, shake it, and try to conjecture from it the feelings of the fine lords and of the fine speakers who wore it.

V.

It is not everything to have a beautiful dress, strongly sewn and fashionable; one must be able to get into it easily. Reviewing the whole train of the English poets of the eighteenth century, we perceive that they do not easily get into the classical dress. This gold-embroidered jacket, so well fitted for a Frenchman, hardly suits their figure; from time to time a hasty, awkward movement makes rents in the sleeves and elsewhere. For instance, Matthew Prior seems at first sight to have all the qualities necessary to wear the jacket well; he has been an ambassador to France, and writes pretty French *vers de société;* he turns off with facility little jesting poems on a dinner, a lady; he is gallant, a man of society, a pleasant story-teller, epicurean, even sceptical like

the courtiers of Charles II., that is to say, as far as and including political roguery; in short, he is an accomplished man of the world, as times went, with a correct and flowing style, having at command a light and a noble verse, and pulling, according to the rules of Bossu and Boileau, the string of mythological puppets. With all this, we find him neither gay enough nor refined enough. Bolingbroke called him wooden-faced, stubborn, and said he had something Dutch in his appearance. His manners smacked very strongly of those of Rochester, and the well-clad refuse which the Restoration bequeathed to the Revolution. He took the first woman at hand, shut himself up with her for several days, drank hard, fell asleep, and let her make off with his money and clothes. Amongst other drabs, ugly enough and always dirty, he finished by keeping Elizabeth Cox, and all but married her; fortunately he died just in time. His style was like his manners. When he tried to imitate La Fontaine's *Hans Carvel*, he made it dull, and lengthened it; he could not be piquant, but he was biting; his obscenities have a cynical crudity; his raillery is a satire; and in one of his poems, *To a Young Gentleman in Love*, the lash becomes a knock-down blow. On the other hand, he was not a common roysterer. Of his two principal poems, one on *Solomon* paraphrases and treats of the remark of Ecclesiastes, 'All is vanity.' From this picture you see forthwith that you are in a biblical land: such an idea would not then have occurred to a friend of the Regent of France, the Duke of Orleans. Solomon relates how he in vain 'proposed his doubts to the lettered Rabbins,' how he has been equally unfortunate in the hopes and desires of love, the possession of power, and ends by trusting to an 'omniscient Master, omnipresent King.' Here we have English gloom and English conclusions.[1] Moreover, under the rhetorical and uniform composition of his verses, we perceive warmth and passion, rich paintings, a sort of magnificence, and the profusion of a surcharged imagination. The sap in England is always stronger than in France; the sensations there are deeper, and the thoughts more original. Prior's other poem, very bold and philosophical, against conventional truths and pedantries, is a droll discourse on the seat of the soul, from which Voltaire has taken many ideas and much foulness. The whole arsenal of the sceptic and materialist was built and published in England, when the French took to it. Voltaire has only selected and sharpened the arrows. Observe also that this poem is wholly written in a prosaic style, with a harsh common sense and a medical frankness, unterrified by the foulest abominations.[2] *Candide* and the *Earl of Chesterfield's*

[1] Prior's Works, ed. Gilfillan, 1851:

'In the remotest wood and lonely grot,
Certain to meet that worst of evils, *thought*.'

[2] *Alma*, canto ii. *v.* 937–978:

'Your nicer Hottentots think meet
With guts and tripe to deck their feet;

Ears, by Voltaire, are more brilliant but not more genuine productions. On the whole, with his coarseness, want of taste, prolixity, perspicacity, passion, there is something in this man not in accordance with classical elegance. He goes beyond it or does not attain it.

This uncongeniality increases, and attentive eyes soon discover under the regular cloak a kind of energetic and precise imagination, ready to break through it. In this age lived Gay, a sort of La Fontaine, as near La Fontaine as an Englishman can be, that is, not very near, but at least kind and amiable, very sincere, very frank, strangely thoughtless, born to be duped, and a young man to the last. Swift said of him that he ought never to have lived more than twenty-two years. 'In wit a man, simplicity a child,' wrote Pope. He lived, like La Fontaine, at the expense of the great, travelled as much as he could at their charge, lost his money in South-Sea speculations, aspired to a place at court, wrote fables full of humanity to form the heart of the Duke of Cumberland,[1] ended by settling as a friend and parasite, as a domestic poet with the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. He had little of the grave in his character; not much of scruple and persistence. It was his sad lot, he said, 'that he could get nothing from the court, whether he wrote for or against it.' And he wrote his own epitaph:

> 'Life is a jest; and all things show it,
> I thought so once; but now I know it.'[2]

This careless laugher, to revenge himself on the minister, wrote the *Beggars' Opera*, the fiercest and dirtiest of caricatures.[3] In this court they slaughter men in place of scratching them; babes handle the knife like the rest. Yet he was a laugher, but in a style of his own, or rather in that of his country. Seeing 'certain young men of insipid delicacy,'[4] Ambrose Philips, for instance, who wrote elegant and tender pastorals, in the manner of Fontenelle, he amused himself by parodying and contradicting them, and in the *Shepherd's Week* introduced real rural manners into the metre and form of the visionary poetry:

'Thou wilt not find my shepherdesses idly piping on oaten reeds, but milking the kine, tying up the sheaves, or, if the hogs are astray, driving them to their

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> With downcast looks on Totta's legs
> The ogling youth most humbly begs,
> She would not from his hopes remove
> At once his breakfast and his love. . . .
> Before you see, you smell your toast,
> And sweetest she who stinks the most.'

[1] The duke who was afterwards nicknamed 'the Butcher.'

[2] *Poems on Several Occasions*, by Mr. John Gay, 1745, 2 vols. ii. 141.

[3] See vol. ii. ch. ii. p. 50.

[4] *Poems on Several Occasions;* The Proeme to *The Shepherd's Week*, i. 64.

styes. My shepherd . . . sleepeth not under myrtle shades, but under a hedge, nor doth he vigilantly defend his flocks from wolves, because there are none.'[1]

Fancy a shepherd of Theocritus or Virgil, compelled to put on hob-nailed shoes and the dress of a Devonshire cowherd; such an oddity would amuse us by the contrast of his person and his garments. So here *The Magician, The Shepherd's Struggle*, are travestied in a modern guise. Listen to the song of the first shepherd, 'Lobbin Clout:'

> 'Leek to the Welch, to Dutchmen butter's dear,
> Of Irish swains potatoe is the chear;
> Oat for their feasts, the Scotish shepherds grind,
> Sweet turnips are the food of Blouzelind.
> While she loves turnips, butter I'll despise,
> Nor leeks, nor oatmeal, nor potatoe prize.'[2]

The other shepherd answers in the same metre; and the duet continues, verse after verse, in the ancient manner, but now amidst turnips, strong beer, fat pigs, bespattered at will by modern country vulgarities and the dirt of a northern climate. Van Ostade and Teniers love these vulgar and clownish idyls; and in Gay, as well as with them, unvarnished and sensual drollery has its sway. The people of the north, who are great eaters, always liked country fairs. The vagaries of toss-pots and gossips, the grotesque outburst of the popular and animal mind, put them into good humour. One must be genuinely a worldling or an artist, a Frenchman or an Italian, to be disgusted with them. They are the product of the country, as well as meat and beer: let us try, in order that we may enjoy them, to forget wine, delicate fruits, to give ourselves blunted senses, to become in imagination compatriots of such men. We have become used to the pictures of these drunken clods, which Louis XIV. called 'baboons,' to these red cooks who scrape their horse-raddish, and to the like scenes. Let us get used to Gay; to his poem *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London;* to his advice as to dirty gutters, and shoes 'with firm, well-hammer'd soles;' his description of the amours of the goddess Cloacina and a scavenger, whence sprang the shoeblacks. He is a lover of the real, has a precise imagination, does not see objects on a large scale, but singly, with all their outlines and surroundings, whatever they may be, beautiful or ugly, dirty or clean. The other literary men act likewise, even the known classical writers, even Pope. There is in Pope a minute description, adorned with high-coloured words, local details, in which abbreviative and characteristic features are stamped with such a liberal and sure hand, that you would take the author for a modern realist, and would find in the work an historical document.[3] As to Swift, he is the

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[1] The Proeme to *The Shepherd's Week*, i. 66.

[2] Gay's Poems, *The Shepherd's Week;* first pastoral, *The Squabble*, p. 80.

[3] *Epistle to Mrs. Blount*, 'on her leaving the town.'

bitterest positivist, and more so in poetry than in prose. Read his eclogue on *Strephon and Chloe*, if you would know how far men can debase the noble poetic drapery. They make a dishclout of it, or dress clodhoppers in it; the Roman toga and Greek chlamys do not suit these barbarians' shoulders. They are like those knights of the middle-ages, who, when they had taken Constantinople, muffled themselves for a joke, in long Byzantine robes, and went riding through the streets in these disguises, dragging their embroidery in the gutter.

These men will do well, like the knights, to return to their manor, their country, the mud of their ditches, and the dunghill of their farm-yards. The less man is fitted for social life, the more he is fitted for solitary life. He enjoys the country the more for enjoying the world less. Englishmen have always been more feudal and more fond of the country than Frenchmen. Under Louis XIV. and Louis XV. the worst misfortune for a nobleman was to go to his estate in the country and grow rusty there; away from the smiles of the king and the fine conversations of Versailles; there was nothing left but to yawn and die. In England, in spite of the artificial civilisation and worldly ceremonies, the love of the chase and of physical exercises, political interests and the necessities of elections brought the nobles back to their domains. And there their natural instincts returned. A sad and impassioned man, naturally self-dependent, converses with objects; a grand grey sky, whereon the autumn mists slumber, a sudden burst of sunshine lighting up a moist field, depress or excite him; inanimate things seem to him instinct with life; and the feeble clearness, which in the morning reddens the fringe of heaven, moves him as much as the smile of a young girl at her first ball. Thus is genuine descriptive poetry born. It appears in Dryden, in Pope himself, even in the writers of elegant pastorals, and breaks out in Thomson's *Seasons*. This poet, the son of a clergyman, and very poor, lived, like most of the literary men of the time, on benefactions and literary subscriptions, on sinecures and political pensions; he did not marry for lack of money; wrote tragedies, because tragedies were lucrative; and ended by settling in a country-house, lying in bed till mid-day, indolent, contemplative, but a good and honest man, affectionate and beloved. He saw and loved the country in its smallest details, not outwardly only, as Saint Lambert,[1] his imitator; he made it his joy, his amusement, his habitual occupation; a gardener at heart, delighted to see the spring arrive, happy to be able to enclose an extra field in his garden. He paints all the little things, without being ashamed, for they interest him; takes pleasure in 'the smell of the dairy;' you hear him speak of the 'insect armies,' and 'when the envenomed leaf begins to curl,'[2] and of the birds which,

[1] A French pastoral writer (1717–1803), who wrote, in imitation of Thomson, *Les Saisons*.—TR.

[2] *Poetical Works of J. Thomson*, ed. R. Bell, 1855, 2 vols.; ii. *Spring*, 18.

foreseeing the approaching rain, 'streak their wings with oil, to throw the lucid moisture trickling off.'[1] He perceives objects so clearly that he makes them visible: we recognise the English landscape, green and moist, half drowned in floating vapours, blotted here and there by violet clouds, which burst in showers at the horizon, which they darken:

'Th' effusive South
Warms the wide air, and o'er the void of heaven
Breathes the big clouds with vernal showers distent.[2] . . .
Thus all day long the full-distended clouds
Indulge their genial stores, and well-showered earth
Is deep enriched with vegetable life;
Till, in the western sky, the downward sun
Looks out, effulgent, from amid the flush
Of broken clouds, gay-shifting to his beam.
The rapid radiance instantaneous strikes
The illumined mountain; through the forest streams;
Shakes on the floods; and in a yellow mist,
Far smoking o'er the interminable plain,
In twinkling myriads lights the dewy gems.
Moist, bright, and green, the landscape laughs around.'[3]

This is emphatic, but it is also opulent. In this air and this vegetation, in this imagination and this style, there is a heaping up, and, as it were, an imparting of effaced or sparkling tints; they are here the glistening and lustrous robe of nature and art. We must see them in Rubens—he is the painter and poet of the teeming and humid clime; but we find it also in others, and in this magnificence of Thomson: in this exaggerated, luxuriant, grand colouring, we find occasionally the rich palette of Rubens.

VI.

All this suits ill the classical embroidery. Thomson's visible imitations of Virgil, his episodes inserted like a veneering, his invocations to spring, to the muse, to philosophy, all the relics of the conventionalisms of the college, produce an incongruity. But the contrast is much more marked in another way. The worldly artificial life such as Louis XIV. had made fashionable, began to weary Europe. It was found dry and hollow; people grew tired of always acting, submitting to etiquette. They felt that gallantry is not love, nor madrigals poetry, nor amusement happiness. They perceived that man is not an elegant doll, or a dandy the masterpiece of nature, and that there is a world outside the drawing-rooms. A Genevese plebeian (J. J. Rousseau), Protestant and solitary, whom religion, education, poverty, and genius had led more quickly and further than others, spoke out the public secret aloud; and it was thought that he had discovered or rediscovered the country, conscience, religion, the rights of man, and natural sentiments. Then

[1] Poetical Works of Thomson, *Spring*, ii. 19.
[2] *Ibid.* 19.
[3] *Ibid.* 20.

appeared a new personality, the idol and model of his time, the sensitive man, who, by his grave character and relish of nature, contrasted with the man of the court. Doubtless this personality smacks of the places he has frequented. He is refined and insipid, melting at the sight of the young lambs nibbling the springing grass, blessing the little birds, who give a concert to celebrate their happiness. He is emphatic and wordy, writes tirades on sentiment, inveighs against the age, apostrophises virtue, reason, truth, and the abstract divinities, which are engraved in delicate outline on the frontispiece. In spite of himself, he continues a man of the drawing-room and the academy; after uttering sweet things to the ladies, he utters them to nature, and declaims in polished periods about the Deity. But after all, it is through him that the revolt against classical customs begins; and in this respect, it is more precocious in Germanic England than in Latin France. Thirty years before Rousseau, Thomson had expressed all Rousseau's sentiments, almost in the same style. Like him, he painted the country with sympathy and enthusiasm. Like him, he contrasted the golden age of primitive simplicity with modern miseries and corruption. Like him, he exalted deep love, conjugal tenderness, the union of souls, and perfect esteem animated by desire, paternal affection, and all domestic joys. Like him, he combated contemporary frivolity, and compared the ancient with the modern republics:

> 'Proofs of a people, whose heroic aims
> Soared far above the little selfish sphere
> Of doubting modern life.'[1]

Like Rousseau, he praised gravity, patriotism, liberty, virtue; rose from the spectacle of nature to the contemplation of God, and showed to man glimpses of immortal life beyond the tomb. Like him, in fine, he marred the sincerity of his emotion and the truth of his poetry by sentimental vapidities, by pastoral billing and cooing, and by such an abundance of epithets, personified abstractions, pompous invocations and oratorical tirades, that we perceive in him beforehand the false and decorative style of Thomas, David,[2] and the Revolution.

Others follow. The literature of that period might be called the library of the sensitive man. First there was Richardson, the puritanic printer, with his Sir Charles Grandison,[3] a man of principles, accomplished model of the gentleman, professor of decorum and morality, with a soul into the bargain. There is Sterne too, the refined and sickly blackguard, who, amid his buffooneries and oddities, pauses to weep over an ass or an imaginary prisoner.[4] There is, in particular, Mackenzie, 'the Man of Feeling,' whose timid, delicate hero weeps five or six times a day; who grows consumptive through sensibility, dares

[1] Poetical Works of Thomson, *Liberty*, part i. 102.

[2] See the paintings of David, called *Les Fêtes de la Révolution.*

[3] See vol. ii. bk. iii. ch. 6, p. 167. [4] See vol. ii. bk. iii. ch. 7, p. 179.

not broach his love till at the point of death, and dies in broaching it. Naturally, praise induces satire; and in the opposite field we see Fielding, valiant roysterer, and Sheridan, brilliant rake, the one with Blifil, the other with Joseph Surface, two hypocrites, especially the second, not coarse, red-faced, and smelling of the vestry, like Tartuffe, but worldly, well-clad, a good speaker, loftily serious, sad and gentle from excess of tenderness, who, with his hand on his heart and a tear in his eye, showers on the public his sentences and periods, whilst he soils his brother's reputation and debauches his neighbour's wife. A character, thus created, soon has an epic made for him. A Scotchman, a man of wit, of overmuch wit, having written to his cost an unsuccessful rhapsody, wished to recover himself, went amongst the mountains of his country, gathered picturesque images, collected fragments of legends, plastered over the whole an abundance of eloquence and rhetoric, and created a Celtic Homer, Ossian, who, with Oscar, Malvina, and his whole troop, made the tour of Europe, and, about 1830, ended by furnishing baptismal names for French *grisettes* and *perruquiers*. Macpherson displayed to the world an imitation of primitive manners, not over-true, for the extreme rudeness of barbarians would have shocked the people, but yet well enough preserved or portrayed to contrast with modern civilisation, and persuade the public that they were looking upon pure nature. A keen sympathy with Scotch landscape, so grand, so cold, so gloomy, rain on the hills, the birch trembling to the wind, the mist of heaven and the vagueness of the soul, so that every dreamer found there the emotions of his solitary walks and his philosophical glooms; chivalric exploits and magnanimity, heroes who set out alone to engage an army, faithful virgins dying on the tomb of their betrothed; an impassioned, coloured style, affecting to be abrupt, yet polished; able to charm a disciple of Rousseau by its warmth and elegance: here was something to transport the young enthusiasts of the time, civilised barbarians, scholarly lovers of nature, dreaming of the delights of savage life, whilst they shook off the powder which the hairdresser had left on their coats.

Yet this is not the course of the main current of poetry; it lies in the direction of sentimental reflection: the greatest number of poems, and those most sought after, are emotional dissertations. In fact, a sensitive man breaks out in violent declamations. When he sees a cloud, he dreams of human nature, and constructs a phrase. Hence at this time among poets, swarm the melting philosophers and the tearful academicians; Gray, the morose hermit of Cambridge, and Akenside, a noble thinker, both learned imitators of lofty Greek poetry; Beattie, a metaphysical moralist, with a young girl's nerves and an old maid's hobbies; the amiable and affectionate Goldsmith, who wrote the *Vicar of Wakefield*,[1] the most charming of Protestant

[1] See vol. ii. bk. iii. ch. 8, p. 182.

pastorals; poor Collins, a young enthusiast, who was disgusted with life, would read nothing but the Bible, went mad, was shut up in an asylum, and in his intervals of liberty wandered in Chichester cathedral, accompanying the music with sobs and groans; Glover, Watts, Shenstone, Smart, and others. The titles of their works sufficiently indicate their character. One writes a poem on *The Pleasures of Imagination*, another on the *Passions* and on *Liberty;* one an *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* and a *Hymn to Adversity*, another a poem on a *Deserted Village*, and on the character of surrounding civilisations (Goldsmith's *Traveller*); another a sort of epic on *Thermopylæ*, and another the moral history of a young *Minstrel.* They were nearly all grave, spiritual men, impassioned for noble ideas, with Christian aspirations or convictions, given to meditating on man, inclined to melancholy, to descriptions, invocations, lovers of abstraction and allegory, who, to attain greatness, willingly mounted on stilts. One of the least strict and most noted of them was Young, the author of *Night Thoughts*, a clergyman and a courtier, who, having vainly attempted to enter Parliament, then to become a bishop, married, lost his wife and children, and made use of his misfortunes to write meditations on *Life*, *Death*, *Immortality*, *Time*, *Friendship*, *The Christian Triumph*, *Virtue's Apology*, *A Moral Survey of the Nocturnal Heavens*, and many other similar pieces. Doubtless there are brilliant flashes of imagination in his poems; seriousness and elevation are not wanting; we can even see that he aims at them; but we discover much more quickly that he makes the most of his grief, and strikes attitudes. He exaggerates and declaims, studies effects and style, confuses Greek and Christian ideas. Fancy an unhappy father, who says:

> 'Silence and Darkness! Solemn sisters! Twins
> Of ancient night! I to Day's soft-ey'd sister pay my court
> (Endymion's rival), and her aid implore
> Now first implor'd in succour to the Muse.' [1]

And a few pages further on invokes heaven and earth, when mentioning the resurrection of the Saviour. And yet the sentiment is fresh and sincere. Is it not one of the greatest of modern ideas to put Christian philosophy into verse? Young and his contemporaries say beforehand that which Chateaubriand and Lamartine were to discover. The true, the futile, all is here forty years earlier than in France. The angels and the other celestial machinery long figured in England before appearing in Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* and the *Martyrs.* Atala and Chactas are of the same family as Malvina and Fingal. If M. de Lamartine read Gray's odes and Akenside's reflections, he would find there the melancholy sweetness, the exquisite art, the fine arguments, and half the ideas of his own poetry. And yet, near as they were to a literary renovation, Englishmen did not yet attain it. In vain the

[1] Young's *Night Thoughts.*

foundation was changed, the form persisted. They did not shake off the classical drapery; they write too well, they dare not be natural. They have always a patent stock of fine suitable words, poetic elegances, where each of them thought himself bound to go and search out his phrases. It boots them nothing to be impassioned or realistic; to dare, like Shenstone, describe a *Schoolmistress*, and the very part on which she whips a young rascal; their simplicity is conscious, their frankness archaic, their emotion compassed, their tears academical. Ever, at the moment of writing, an august model starts up, a sort of schoolmaster, weighing on each with his full weight, with all the weight which a hundred and twenty years of literature can give his precepts. Their prose is always the slave of the period: Samuel Johnson, who was at once the La Harpe and the Boileau of his age, explains and imposes on all the studied, balanced, irreproachable phrase; and the classical ascendency is still so strong that it domineers over the infancy of history, the only kind of English literature which was then European and original. Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon were almost French in their taste, language, education, conception of man. They relate like men of the world, cultivated and instructed, with charm and clearness, in a polished, rhythmic, sustained style. They show a liberal spirit, a continuous moderation, an impartial reason. They banish from history all coarseness and tediousness. They write without caprice or prejudice. But, at the same time, they attenuate human nature; comprehend neither barbarism nor exaltation; paint revolutions, as people might do who had seen nothing but decked drawing-rooms and dusted libraries; they judge enthusiasts with the coldness of chaplains or the smile of a sceptic; they blot out the salient features which distinguish human physiognomies; they cover all the harsh points of truth with a brilliant and uniform varnish. At last there started up an unfortunate Scotch ploughman (Burns), rebelling against the world, and in love, with the yearnings, lusts, greatness, and irrationality of modern genius. Now and then, driving his plough, he lighted on genuine verses, verses such as Heine and Alfred de Musset have made in our own days. In those few words, combined after a new fashion, there was a revolution. Two hundred new verses sufficed. The human mind turned on its hinges, and so did civil society. When Roland, being made a minister, presented himself before Louis XVI. in a simple dress-coat and shoes without buckles, the master of the ceremonies raised his hands to heaven, thinking that all was lost. In fact, all was changed.

BOOK IV.

MODERN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Ideas and Productions.

I. Changes in society—Rise of democracy—The French Revolution—Desire of getting on—Changes in the human mind—New notion of causes—German philosophy—Craving for the beyond.

II. Robert Burns—His country—Family—Youth—Wretchedness—His yearnings and efforts—Invectives against society and church—The *Jolly Beggars*—Attacks on conventional cant—His idea of natural life—of moral life—Talent—Spontaneity—Style—Innovations—Success—Affectations—Studied letters and academic verse—Farmer's life—Employment in the Excise—Disgust—Excesses—Death.

III. Conservative rule in England—The Revolution affects the style only—Cowper—Sickly refinement—Madness—Retirement—*The Task*—Modern idea of poetry—Of style.

IV. The Romantic school—Its pretensions—Its tentatives—The two ideas of modern literature—History enters into literature—Lamb, Coleridge, Southey, Moore—Faults of this school—Why it succeeded less in England than elsewhere—Sir Walter Scott—Education—Antiquarian studies—Aristocratic tastes—Life—Poems—Novels—Incompleteness of his historical imitations—Excellence of his national pictures—His interiors—Amiable raillery—Moral aim—Place in modern civilisation—Development of the novel in England—Realism and uprightness—Wherein this school is cockneyfied and English.

V. Philosophy enters into literature—Lack of harmony in the style—Wordsworth—Character—Condition—Life—Painting of the moral life in the vulgar life—Introduction of the gloomy style and psychological divisions—Faults of style—Loftiness of his sonnets—The *Excursion*—Austere beauty of this Protestant poetry—Shelley—Imprudences—Theories—Fancy—Pantheism—Ideal characters—Life-like scenery—General tendency of the new literature—Gradual introduction of continental ideas.

I.

ON the eve of the nineteenth century began in Europe the great modern revolution. The thinking public and the human mind changed, and underneath these two collisions a new literature sprang up.

The preceding age had done its work. Perfect prose and classical style put within reach of the most backward and the dullest minds the notions of literature and the discoveries of science. Moderate monarchies and regular administrations had permitted the middle class to develop itself under the pompous aristocracy of the court, as useful plants may be seen shooting up under trees which serve for show and ornament. They multiply, grow, rise to the height of their rivals, envelop them in their luxuriant growth, and obscure them by their density. A new world, commonplace, plebeian, thenceforth occupies the ground, attracts the gaze, imposes its form in manners, stamps its image in the mind. Towards the close of the century a sudden concourse of extraordinary events displays it all at once to the light, and sets it on an eminence unknown to any previous age. With the grand applications of science, democracy appears. The steam-engine and spinning-jenny create in England towns of from three hundred and fifty thousand to five hundred thousand souls. The population is doubled in fifty years, and agriculture becomes so perfect, that, in spite of this enormous increase of mouths to be fed, one-sixth of the inhabitants provide from the same soil food for the rest; importations increase threefold, and even more; the tonnage of vessels increases sixfold, the exportation sixfold and more.[1] Prosperity, leisure, instruction, reading, travels, whatever had been the privilege of a few, became the common property of the majority. The rising tide of wealth raised the best of the poor to comfort, and the best of the well-to-do to opulence. The rising tide of civilisation raised the mass of the people to the rudiments of education, and the mass of citizens to complete education. In 1709 appeared the first daily newspaper,[2] as big as a man's hand, which the editor did not know how to fill, and which, added to all the other papers, did not produce yearly three thousand numbers. In 1844 the Stamp Office showed 71 million numbers, many as large and as full as volumes. Artisans and townsfolk, enfranchised, enriched, having gained a competence, left the low depths where they had been buried in their narrow parsimony, ignorance, and routine; they came on the scene, forsook their workman-like and supernumerary's dress, assumed the leading parts by a sudden irruption or a continuous progress, by dint of revolutions, with a prodigality of labour and genius, amidst vast wars, successively or simultaneously in America, France, the whole of Europe, founding or destroying states, inventing or restoring sciences, conquering or acquiring political rights. They grew noble through their great deeds, became the rivals, equals, conquerors of their masters; they need no longer imitate them, being heroes in their

[1] See Alison, *History of Europe;* Porter, *Progress of the Nation.*

[2] In the *Fourth Estate*, by F. Knight Hunt, 2 vols. 1840, it is said (i. 175) that the first daily and morning paper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared in 1709.—Tr.

turn: like them, they can point to their crusades; like them, they have gained the right of having a poetry; and like them, they will have a poetry.

In France, the land of precocious equality and finished revolutions, we must observe this new character—the plebeian bent on getting on: Augereau, son of a greengrocer; Marceau, son of a lawyer; Murat, son of an innkeeper; Ney, son of a cooper; Hoche, an old sergeant, who in his tent, by night, read Condillac's *Traité des Sensations;* and above all, that thin young man, with lank hair, hollow cheeks, dried up with ambition, his heart full of romantic fancies and grand rough-hewn ideas, who, a lieutenant for seven years, read twice through the whole stock of a bookseller at Valence, who about this time (1792) in Italy, though suffering from itch, had just destroyed five armies with a troop of barefooted heroes, and gave his government an account of his victories with all his faults of spelling and of French. He became master, proclaimed himself the representative of the Revolution, declared 'that the career is open to talent,' and impelled others along with him in his enterprises. They follow him, because there is glory, and above all, advancement to be won. 'Two officers,' says Stendhal, 'commanded a battery at Talavera; a ball laid low the captain. "So!" said the lieutenant, "François is dead, I shall be captain." "Not yet," said François, who was only stunned, and got on his feet again.' These two men were neither enemies nor wicked; on the contrary, they were companions and comrades; but the lieutenant wanted to rise a step. Such was the sentiment which provided men for the exploits and carnages of the Empire, which caused the Revolution of 1830, and which now, in this vast stifling democracy, compels men to vie with each other in intrigues and labour, genius and baseness, to get out of their primitive condition, and raise themselves to the summit, whose possession is assigned to their union or promised to their toil. The dominant character now-a-days is no longer the man of the drawing-room, whose place is certain and his fortune made, elegant and unruffled, with no employment but to amuse and please himself; who loves to converse, who is gallant, who passes his life in conversations with highly dressed ladies, amidst the duties of society and the pleasures of the world: it is the man in a black coat, who works alone in his room or rides in a cab to make friends and protectors; often envious, feeling himself always above or below his station in life, sometimes resigned, never satisfied, but fertile in inventions, lavish of trouble, finding the picture of his blemishes and his strength in the drama of Victor Hugo and the novels of Balzac.[1]

There are other and greater cares. With the state of human society, the form of the human mind has changed. It has changed by

[1] To realise the contrast, compare *Gil Blas* and *Ruy Blas*, Marivaux's *Paysan Parvenu* and Stendhal's Julien Sorel (in *Rouge et Noir*).

a natural and irresistible development, like a flower growing into a fruit, like a fruit turning to seed. The mind renews the evolution which it had already performed in Alexandria, not as then in a deleterious atmosphere, in the universal degradation of enslaved men, in the increasing decadence of a dissolving society, amidst the anguish of despair and the mists of a dream; but lapt in a purifying atmosphere, amidst the visible progress of an improving society and the general ennobling of free and elevated men, amidst the proudest hopes, in the wholesome clearness of experimental sciences. The oratorical age which declined, as it declined in Athens and Rome, grouped all ideas in beautiful commodious compartments, whose subdivisions instantaneously led the gaze towards the object which they would define, so that thenceforth the intellect could enter upon the loftiest conceptions, and seize the aggregate which it had not yet embraced. Isolated nations, French, English, Italians, Germans, came to draw near and know each other after the shaking of the Revolution and the wars of the Empire, as formerly the separate races, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Gauls, by the conquests of Alexander and the domination of Rome: so that henceforth each civilisation, expanded by the collision of neighbouring civilisations, can pass beyond its national limits, and multiply its ideas by the commixture of the ideas of others. History and criticism grew as under the Ptolemies; and from all sides, throughout the universe, at all points of time, they were engaged in resuscitating and explaining literatures, religions, manners, societies, philosophies: so that thenceforth the intellect, enfranchised by the spectacle of past civilisations, could escape from the prejudices of its country. A new race, hitherto torpid, gave the signal: Germany communicated over the whole of Europe the impetus to the revolution of ideas, as France to the revolution of manners. These good folk who smoked and warmed themselves by the side of a stove, and seemed only fit to produce learned editions, found themselves suddenly the promoters and leaders of human thought. No race has such a comprehensive mind; none is so well endowed for lofty speculation. We see it in their language, so abstract, that beyond the Rhine it seems an unintelligible jargon. And yet, thanks to this language, they attained to superior ideas. For the specialty of this revolution, as of the Alexandrian revolution, was that the human mind became more capable of abstraction. They made, on a large scale, the same step as the mathematicians when they passed from arithmetic to algebra, and from the ordinary calculus to the calculus of the infinite. They perceived, that beyond the limited truths of the oratorical age, there were deeper unfoldings; they passed beyond Descartes and Locke, as the Alexandrians beyond Plato and Aristotle: they understood that a great architect, or round and square atoms, were not causes; that fluids, molecules, and monads were not forces; that a spiritual soul or a physiological secretion would not account for thought. They sought religious sentiment beyond dogmas, poetic beauty beyond rules, critical

truth beyond myths. They desired to grasp natural and moral powers themselves, independently of the fictitious supports to which their predecessors had attached them. All these supports, souls and atoms, all these fictions, fluids, and monads, all these conventions, rules of the beautiful and religious symbols, all rigid classifications of things natural, human and divine, faded away and vanished. Thenceforth they were nothing but figures; they were only kept as an aid to the memory, and as auxiliaries of the mind; they served only provisionally, and as starting-points. Through a common movement along the whole line of human thought, causes draw back into an abstract region, where philosophy had not been to search them out for eighteen centuries. Then was manifested the disease of the age, the restlessness of Werther and Faust, very like that which in a similar moment agitated men eighteen centuries ago; I mean, discontent with the present, the vague desire of a higher beauty and an ideal happiness, the painful aspiration for the infinite. Man suffered from doubt, yet he doubted; he tried to seize again his beliefs, they melted in his hand; he would sit down and rest in the doctrines and the satisfactions which sufficed his predecessors, and he does not find them sufficient. He expends himself, like Faust, in anxious researches through science and history, and judges them vain, dubious, good for men like Wagner,[1] pedants of the academy and the library. It is the beyond he sighs for; he forebodes it through the formulas of science, the texts and confessions of the churches, through the amusements of the world, the intoxications of love. A sublime truth exists behind coarse experience and handed-down catechisms; a grand happiness exists beyond the pleasures of society and the delights of a family. Sceptical, resigned, or mystics, they have all caught a glimpse of or imagined it, from Goethe to Beethoven, from Schiller to Heine; they have risen towards it in order to stir up the whole swarm of their grand dreams; they will not be consoled for falling away from it; they have mused upon it, even during their deepest fall; they have instinctively dwelt, like their predecessors the Alexandrians and Christians, in that splendid invisible world in which, in ideal peace, slumber the creative essences and powers; and the vehement aspiration of their heart has drawn from their sphere the elementary spirits, 'film of flame, who flit and wave in eddying motion! birth and the grave, an infinite ocean, a web ever growing, a life ever glowing, ply at Time's whizzing loom, and weave the vesture of God.'[2]

Thus rises the modern man, impelled by two sentiments, one democratic, the other philosophic. From the shallows of his poverty and ignorance he rises with effort, lifting the weight of established society and admitted dogmas, disposed either to reform or to destroy them, and at once generous and rebellious. Then two currents from France and Germany at this moment swept into England. The dykes there

[1] The disciple of Faust.

[2] Goethe's *Faust*, sc. 1.

were so strong, they could hardly force their way, entering more slowly than elsewhere, but entering nevertheless. They made themselves a new course between the ancient barriers, and widened without bursting them, by a peaceful and slow transformation which continues till this day.

II.

The new spirit broke out first in a Scotch peasant, Robert Burns: in fact, the man and the circumstances were suitable; scarcely ever was seen together more of misery and talent. He was born January 1759, in the frost and snow of a Scotch winter, in a cottage of clay built by his father, a poor farmer of Ayrshire; a sad condition, a sad country, a sad lot. A part of the gable fell in a few days after his birth, and his mother was obliged to seek refuge with her child, in the middle of a storm, in a neighbour's house. It is hard to be born in this country. The soil is wretched; and there are many bare hills, where the harvest often fails. Burns' father, already old, having little more than his arms to depend upon, having taken his farm at too high a rent, burdened with seven children, lived parsimoniously, or rather fasting, in solitude, to avoid temptations to expense. 'For several years butchers' meat was a thing unknown in the house.' Robert went barefoot and bareheaded; at 'the age of thirteen he assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen he was the principal labourer on the farm.' The family did all the labour; they kept no servant, male or female. They scarcely ate, and they worked too much. 'This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley slave—brought me to my sixteenth year,' Burns says. His shoulders were bowed, melancholy seized him; 'almost every evening he was constantly afflicted with a dull headache, which at a future period of his life was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.' 'The anguish of mind which we felt,' says his brother, 'was very great.' The father grew old; his gray head, careworn brow, temples 'wearing thin and bare,' his tall bent figure, bore witness to the grief and toil which had spent him. The factor wrote him insolent and threatening letters which 'set all the family in tears.' There was a respite when the father changed his farm, but a lawsuit sprang up between him and the proprietor:

> 'After three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a gaol by a consumption, which after two years' promises kindly stepped in.'

In order to snatch something from the claws of the lawyers, the two sons were obliged to step in as creditors for arrears of wages. With this little sum they took another farm. Robert had seven pounds a year for his labour; for several years his whole expenses did not exceed this wretched pittance; he had resolved to succeed by force of abstinence and toil:

'I read farming books, I calculated crops, I attended markets; . . . but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops.'

Troubles came apace; poverty always engenders them. The master-mason Armour, whose daughter was Burns' sweetheart, was said to contemplate prosecuting him, to obtain a guarantee for the support of his expected progeny, though he refused to accept him as a son-in-law. Jean Armour abandoned him; he could not give his name to the child that was coming. He was obliged to hide; he had been subjected to a public punishment. He said: 'Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner.' He resolved to leave the country; he agreed with Mr. Charles Douglas for thirty pounds a year to be bookkeeper or overseer on his estate in Jamaica; for want of money to pay the passage, he was about to 'indent himself,' that is, become bound as apprentice, when the success of his volume put a score of guineas into his hands, and for a time brought him brighter days. Such was his life up to the age of twenty-seven, and that which succeeded was little better.

Fancy in this condition a man of genius, a true poet, capable of the most delicate emotions and the most lofty aspirations, wishing to rise, to rise to the summit, of which he deemed himself capable and worthy.[1]

Ambition had early made itself heard in him:

'I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind groping of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. . . . The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune were the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance.'[2]

Low occupations depress the soul even more than the body; man perishes in them—is obliged to perish; of necessity there remains of him nothing but a machine: for in the kind of action in which all is monotonous, in which throughout the long day the arms lift the same flail and drive the same plough, if thought does not take this uniform movement, the work is ill done. The poet must take care not to be turned aside by his poetry; to do as Burns did, 'think only of his work whilst he was at it.' He must think of it always, in the evening unyoking his cattle, on Sunday putting on his new coat, counting on his fingers the eggs and poultry, thinking of the kinds of dung, finding a means of using only one pair of shoes, and of selling his hay at a penny a truss more. He will not succeed if he has not the patient

[1] Most of these details are taken from the *Life and Works of Burns*, by R. Chambers, 1851, 4 vols.

[2] Chambers, *Life of Burns*, i. 14.

dulness of a labourer, and the crafty vigilance of a petty shopkeeper. How would you have poor Burns succeed? He was out of place from his birth, and tried his utmost to raise himself above his condition.[1] At the farm at Lochlea, during meal-times, the only moments of relaxation, parents, brothers, and sisters, ate with a spoon in one hand and a book in the other. Burns, at the school of Hugh Rodger, a teacher of mensuration, and later at a club of young men at Torbolton, strove to exercise himself in general questions, and debated *pro* and *con* in order to see both sides of every idea. He carried a book in his pocket to study in spare moments in the fields; he wore out thus two copies of Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*. 'The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I poured over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender, sublime, or fustian.' He maintained a correspondence with several of his companions in the same rank of life in order to form his style, kept a common-place book, entered in it ideas on man, religion, the greatest subjects, criticising his first productions. Burns says, 'Never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished.' He thus divined what he did not learn, rose of himself to the level of the most highly cultivated; in a while, at Edinburgh, he was to read through and through respected doctors, Blair himself; he was to see that Blair had attainments, but no depth. At this time he studied minutely and lovingly the old Scotch ballads; and by night in his cold little room, by day whilst whistling at the plough, he invented forms and ideas. We must think of this in order to understand his miseries and his revolt. We must think that the man in whom these great ideas are stirring, threshed the corn, cleaned his cows, went out to dig turf, waded in the muddy snow, and dreaded to come home and find the bailiffs to carry him off to prison. We must think also, that with the ideas of a thinker he had the delicacies and reveries of a poet. Once, having cast his eyes on an engraving representing a dead soldier, and his wife beside him, his child and dog lying in the snow, suddenly, involuntarily, he burst into tears. He writes:

'There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. . . . I listened to the birds and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs or frighten them to another station. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart, at such a time, but must have been interested for his welfare?'[2]

This swarm of grand or graceful dreams, the slavery of mechanical toil and perpetual economy crushed as soon as they began to soar. Add to this a proud character, so proud, that afterwards in the world, amongst the great, 'an honest contempt for whatever bore the

[1] My great constituent elements are pride and passion.

[2] Extract from Burns' commonplace-book; Chambers' *Life*, i. 79.

appearance of meanness and servility' made him 'fall into the opposite error of hardness of manner.' He had also the consciousness of his own merits. '*Pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an opinion of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favour.'[1] What wonder if we find at every step in his poems the bitter protests of an oppressed and rebellious plebeian?

We find such recriminations against all society, against State and Church. Burns has a harsh tone, often the very phrases of Rousseau, and wished to be a 'vigorous savage,' as he says, quit civilised life, the dependence and humiliations which it imposes on the wretched.

'It is mortifying to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an eight-penny taylor, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty.'[2]

It is hard to

'See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.'[3]

Burns says also:

'While winds frae off Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw, . . .
I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,
That live so bien an' snug:
I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker and canker
To see their cursed pride.
It's hardly in a body's power
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair 't.'[4]

But 'a man's a man for a' that,' and the peasant is as good as the lord. There are men noble by nature, and they alone are noble; the coat is the business of the tailor, titles a matter for the Herald's office. 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp, the man's the gowd for a' that.'

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[1] Chambers' *Life*, i. 231. Burns had a right to think so: when he spoke at night in an inn, the very servants woke their fellow-labourers to come and hear him.

[2] Chambers, *Life and Works of Robert Burns*, ii. 68.

[3] *Man was made to Mourn*, a dirge.

[4] *First Epistle to Davie, a brother poet.*

Against such as reverse this natural equality Burns is pitiless; the least thing puts him out of temper. Read his 'Address of Beelzebub, to the Right Honourable the Earl of Breadalbane, President of the Right Honourable and Honourable the Highland Society, which met on the 23d of May last at the Shakspeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of five hundred Highlanders, who, as the society were informed by Mr. Mackenzie of Applecross, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters, whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. M'Donald of Glengarry to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—liberty!' Rarely was an insult more prolonged and more biting, and the threat is not far behind. He warns Scottish members like a revolutionist: withdraw 'that curst restriction on aquavitae;' 'get auld Scotland back her kettle:'

'An', Lord, if ance they pit her till't,
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt
I' the first she meets!'[1]

In vain he writes, that

'In politics if thou wouldst mix
And mean thy fortunes be;
Bear this in mind, be deaf and blind,
Let great folks hear and see.'[2]

Not alone did he see and hear, but he also spoke, and that aloud. He congratulates the French on having repulsed conservative Europe, in arms against them. He celebrates the Tree of Liberty, planted 'where ance the Bastile stood:'

'Upo' this tree there grows sic fruit,
Its virtues a' can tell, man;
It raises man aboon the brute,
It makes him ken himsel', man.
Gif ance the peasant taste a bit,
He's greater than a Lord, man. . . .
King Loui' thought to cut it down,
When it was unco sma', man.
For this the watchman cracked his crown,
Cut off his head and a', man.'[3]

Strange gaiety, always savage and nervous, and which, in better style, resembles that of the *Ca ira*.

Burns is hardly more tender to the church. At that time the strait puritanical garment began to give way. Already the learned world

[1] *Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Representatives.*
[2] *The Creed of Poverty;* Chambers' *Life*, iv. 86. [3] *The Tree of Liberty.*

of Edinburgh had Frenchified, widened, adapted it to the fashions of society, decked it with ornaments, not very brilliant, it is true, but select. In the lower strata of society dogma became less rigid, and approached by degrees the looseness of Arminius and Socinus. John Goldie, a merchant, had quite recently discussed the authority of Scripture.[1] John Taylor had denied original sin. Burns' father, pious as he was, inclined to liberal and humane doctrines, and detracted from the province of faith to add to that of reason. Burns, after his wont, pushed things to an extreme, thought himself a deist, saw in the Saviour only an inspired man, reduced religion to an inner and poetic sentiment, and attacked with his railleries the paid and patented orthodox people. Since Voltaire, no one in religious matters was more bitter or more jocose. According to him, ministers are shopkeepers trying to cheat each other out of their customers, decrying at the top of their voice the shop next door, puffing their drugs on numberless posters, and here and there setting up fairs to push the trade. These 'holy fairs' are the gatherings of piety, where the sacrament is administered. Successively the clergymen preach and thunder, in particular a Rev. Mr. Moodie, who raves and fumes to throw light on points of faith—a terrible figure:

'Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie face
To's ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.
Hear how he clears the points o' faith
Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'; . . .
He's stampin' an' he's jumpin!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel and gestures,
Oh! how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day!'[2]

The minister grows hoarse, and his audience take their ease; they begin to eat. Each brings cakes and cheese from his bag; the young folks have their arms round their lassies' waists. That was the attitude to listen in! There is a great noise in the inn; the cans rattle on the board; whisky flows, and provides arguments to the tipplers commenting on the sermon. They demolish carnal reason, and exalt free faith. Arguments and stamping, shouts of sellers and drinkers, all mingle together. It is a 'holy fair:'

But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin',
An' echoes back return the shouts;
Black Russell is na spairin';

[1] 1780.

[2] *The Holy Fair.*

His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,
Divide the joints and marrow.
His talk o' hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera sauls does harrow
Wi' fright that day.

A vast unbottom'd boundless pit,
Fill'd fu' o' lowin' brunstane,
Wha's raging flame, an' scorchin' heat,
Wad melt the hardest whunstane.
The half-asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear
'Twas but some neebor snorin'
Asleep that day. . . .

How monie hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane,
As saft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fou o' love divine,
There's some are fou o' brandy.'[1]

The young men meet the girls, and the devil has done better business than God. A fine ceremony and morality! Let us cherish it carefully, and our wise theology too, which damns men.

As for that poor dog common sense, which bites so hard, let us send him across seas; let him go 'and bark in France:' For where shall we find better men than our 'unco guid'—Holy Willie for instance? He feels himself predestinated, full of never-failing grace; therefore all who resist him resist God, and are fit only to be punished; he may 'blast their name, who bring thy elders to disgrace, and public shame.'[2] Burns says also:

'An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge an' malice fause
He'll still disdain;
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws
Like some we ken. . . .
. . . I rather would be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen.'[3]

There is a beauty, an honesty, a happiness outside the conventionalities and hypocrisy, beyond correct preachings and the proper drawing-rooms, unconnected with gentlemen in white ties and reverends in new bands.

Now Burns wrote his masterpiece, the *Jolly Beggars*, like the *Gueux*

[1] *The Holy Fair.*
[2] *Holy Willie's Prayer.*
[3] *Epistle to the Rev. John M'Math.*

of Béranger; but how much more picturesque, varied, and powerful! It is the end of autumn, the gray leaves float on the gusts of the wind; a joyous band of vagabonds, happy devils, come for a junketing at the change-house of Poosie Nansie:

'Wi' quaffing and laughing
They ranted and they sang;
Wi' jumping and thumping
The very girdle rang.'

First, by the fire, in old red rags, is a soldier, and his old woman is with him; the jolly old girl has drunk freely; he kisses her, and she again pokes out her greedy lips; the coarse loud kisses smack like 'a cadger's whip.' 'Then staggering and swaggering, he roar'd this ditty up:'

'I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batt'ries,
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum. . . .
He ended; and the kebars sheuk,
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore.'

Now it is the 'doxy's' turn:

'I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men. . . .
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade. . . .
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church. . . .
Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got,
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie. . . .
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.'

I hope you think this a free style, and that the poet is not mealy-mouthed. His other characters are in the same taste, a Merry Andrew, a raucle carlin (a stout beldame), a 'pigmy-scraper wi' his fiddle,' a travelling tinker,—all in rags, brawlers and gipsies, who fight, bang, and kiss each other, and make the glasses ring with the noise of their good humour:

'They toomed their pocks, and pawned their duds,
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
To quench their lowin' drouth.'

And their chorus rolls about like thunder, shaking the rafters and walls.

'A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest!

What is title? What is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have characters to lose.

Here's to budgets, bags and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets!
One and all cry out.—Amen.'

Has any one better spoken the language of rebels and levellers. There is here, however, something else than the instinct of destruction and the appeal to the senses; there is hatred of cant and return to nature. Burns sings:

'Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain;
Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is
In moral mercy, truth and justice!'[1]

Mercy! this great word renews all: as, eighteen centuries ago, men passed beyond legal formulas and prescriptions; as, under Virgil and Marcus Aurelius, refined sensibility and wide sympathies embraced beings who seemed for ever banished out of the pale of society and law. Burns grows tender, and that sincerely, over a wounded hare, a mouse whose nest was upturned by his plough, a mountain daisy. Man, beast, or plant, is there so much difference? A mouse stores up, calculates, suffers like a man:

'I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live.'

We even no longer wish to curse the fallen angels, the grand malefactors, Satan and his troop; like the 'randie, gangrel bodies, who in Poosie Nancy's held the splore,' they have their good points, and perhaps after all are not so bad as people say:

[1] *A Dedication to Gavin Hamilton.*

'Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel! . . .

Then you, ye auld, snic-drawing dog!
Ye came to Paradise incog.
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog,
'Maist ruin'd a'. . . .

But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake.'[1]

We see that he speaks to the devil as to an unfortunate comrade, a quarrelsome fellow, but fallen into trouble. Another step, and you will see in a contemporary, Goethe, that Mephistopheles himself is not overmuch damned; his god, the modern god, tolerates him, and tells him that he has never hated such as he. For wide conciliating nature assembles in her company, on equal terms, the ministers of destruction and life. In this deep change the ideal changes; citizen and orderly life, strict Puritan duty, do not exhaust all the powers of man. Burns cries out in favour of instinct and joy, so as to seem epicurean. He has genuine gaiety, comic energy; laughter commends itself to him; he praises it and the good suppers of good comrades, where the wine flows, pleasantry abounds, ideas pour forth, poetry sparkles, and causes a carnival of beautiful figures and good-humoured people to move about in the human brain.

In love he always was.[2] He made love the great end of existence, to such a degree that at the club which he founded with the young men of Torbolton, every member was obliged 'to be the declared lover of one or more fair ones.' From the age of fifteen this was his main business. He had for companion in his harvest toil a sweet and lovable girl, a year younger than himself:

'In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below.'[3]

He sat beside her, with a joy which he did not understand, to 'pick

[1] *Address to the Deil.*

[2] He himself says: 'I have been all along a miserable dupe to Love.' His brother Gilbert said: 'He was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver.'

[3] Chambers' *Life of Burns*, i. 12.

out from her little hand the cruel nettle-stings and thistles.' He had many other less innocent fancies; it seems to me that he was at bottom in love with all women: as soon as he saw a pretty one, he grew gay; his commonplace-book and his songs show that he set off in pursuit after every butterfly, golden or not, which seemed about to settle. Observe that he did not confine himself to Platonic reveries; he was as free of action as of words: obscene jokes come freely in his verses. He calls himself an unregenerate heathen, and he is right. He has even written ribald verses; and Lord Byron refers to a packet of his letters, unedited of course, than which worse could not be imagined: it was the excess of the sap which overflowed in him, and soiled the bark. Doubtless he did not boast about these excesses, he rather repented of them; but as to the uprising and blooming of the free poetic life toward the open air, he found no fault with it. He thought that love, with the charming dreams it brings, poetry, pleasure, and the rest, are beautiful things, appropriate to human instincts, and therefore to the designs of God. In short, in contrast with morose Puritanism, he approved joy and spoke well of happiness.[1]

Not that he was a mere epicurean; on the contrary, he could be religious. When, after the death of his father, he prayed aloud in the evening, he drew tears from those present; and his *Cottar's Saturday Night* is the most feeling of virtuous idyls. I even believe he was fundamentally religious. He advised his 'pupil, as he tenders his own peace, to keep up a regular warm intercourse with the Deity.' Often, before Dugald Stewart at Edinburgh, he disapproved of the sceptical jokes which he heard at the supper table. He thought he had 'every evidence for the reality of a life beyond, the stinted bourne of our present existence;' and many a time, side by side with a jocose satire, we find in his writings stanzas full of humble repentance, confiding fervour, or Christian resignation. These, if you will, are a poet's contradictions, but they are also a poet's divinations; under these apparent variations there rises a new ideal; old narrow moralities are to give place to the wide sympathy of the modern man, who loves the beautiful wherever it meets him, and who, refusing to mutilate human nature, is at once Pagan and Christian.

This originality and divining instinct exist in his style as in his ideas. The specialty of the age in which we live, and which he inaugurated, is to blot out rigid distinctions of class, catechism, and style; academic, moral, or social conventions are falling away, and we claim in society dominion for individual merit, in morality for inborn generosity, in literature for genuine feeling. Burns was the first to enter on this track, and he often pursues it to the end. When he wrote verses, it was not on calculation or in obedience to the fashion:

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[1] See a passage from Burns' commonplace-book in Chambers' *Life of Burns*, i. 93.

'My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet.'[1]

He hummed them, as he drove his plough, to old Scotch airs, which he passionately loved, and which, he says, as soon as he sang them, brought ideas and rhymes to his lips. That, indeed, was natural poetry; not forced in a hothouse, but born of the soil between the furrows, side by side with music, amidst the gloom and beauty of the climate, like the violet gorse of the hillside and wolds. We can understand that it gave vigour to his tongue: for the first time this man spoke as men speak, or rather as they think, without premeditation, with a mixture of all styles, familiar and terrible, hiding an emotion under a joke, tender and jeering in the same place, apt to combine taproom trivialities with the high language of poetry,[2] so indifferent was he to rules, content to exhibit his feeling as it came to him, and as he felt it. At last, after so many years, we escape from the measured declamation, we hear a man's voice! much better, we forget the voice in the emotion which it expresses, we feel this emotion reflected in ourselves, we enter into relations with a soul. Then form seems to fade away and disappear: I will say that this is the great feature of modern poetry; Burns has reached it seven or eight times.

He has done more; he has made his way, as we say now-a-days. On the publication of his first volume he became suddenly famous. Coming to Edinburgh, he was feasted, caressed, admitted on a footing of equality in the best drawing-rooms, amongst the great and the learned, loved of a woman who was almost a lady. For one season he was sought after, and he behaved worthily amidst these rich and noble people. He was respected, and even loved. A subscription brought him a second edition and five hundred pounds. He also at last had won his position, like the great French plebeians, amongst whom Rousseau was the first. Unfortunately he brought thither, like them, the vices of his condition and of his genius. A man does not rise with impunity, nor, above all, desire to rise with impunity: we also have our vices, and suffering vanity is the first of them. Nobody wished more anxiously than Burns to be distinguished This grievous pride marred his talent, and threw him into follies. He laboured to attain a fine epistolary style, and brought ridicule on himself by imitating in his letters the men of the academy and the court. He wrote to his loves with choice phrases, full of periods, as pedantic as those of Dr. Johnson. Certainly we dare hardly quote them, the emphasis is so grotesque.[3] At other times

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[1] Chambers' *Life*, i. 38.

[2] See *Tam o' Shanter*, *Address to the Deil*, *The Jolly Beggars*, *A Man's a Man for a' that*, *Green grow the rushes*, etc.

[3] 'O Clarinda, shall we not meet in a state, some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of plenty shall minister to the highest wish of benevolence,

he committed to his commonplace-book literary tirades that occurred to him, and six months afterwards sent them to his correspondents as extemporary effusions and natural improvisations. Even in his verses, often enough, he fell into a grand conventional style;[1] brought into play sighs, ardours, flames, even the big classical and mythological machinery. Béranger, who thought or called himself the poet of the people, did the same. A plebeian must have much courage to venture on always remaining himself, and never slipping on the court dress. Thus Burns, a Scottish villager, avoided, in speaking, all Scotch village expressions; he was pleased to show himself as well-bred as fashionable folks. It was forcibly and by surprise that his genius drew him out of these proprieties: twice out of three times his feeling was marred by his pretentiousness.

His success lasted one winter, after which the wide incurable wound of plebeianism made itself felt,—I mean that he was obliged to work for his living. With the money gained by his book he hired a little farm. It was a bad bargain; and, moreover, we can imagine that he had not the money-grubbing character necessary. He says:

'I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing; but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned obligation to make one guinea do the business of three, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word business.'

Soon he left his farm, with empty pockets, to fill at Dumfries the small post of exciseman, which was worth, in all, £90 a year. In this fine employment he branded leather, gauged casks, tested the make of candles, issued licences for the carriage of spirits. From his dunghills he passed to office work and grocery: what a life for such a man! He would have been unhappy, even if independent and rich. These great innovators, these poets, are all alike. What makes them poets is the violent afflux of sensations. They have a nervous mechanism more sensitive than ours; the objects which leave us cool, transport them suddenly beyond themselves. At the least shock their brain is set going, after which they once more fall flat, loathe existence, sit morose amidst the memories of their faults and their last delights. Burns said:

'My worst enemy is *moi-même*. . . . There are just two creatures I would envy: a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear.'

He was always in extremes, at the height or at the depth; in the

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and where the chill north-wind of prudence shall never blow over the flowery fields of enjoyment?'

[1] *Epistle to James Smith:*

'O Life, how pleasant is thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning,
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson spurning!'

morning, ready to weep; in the evening, at table or under the table; enamoured of Jean Armour, then on her refusal engaged to another, then returning to Jean, then quitting her, then taking her back, amidst much scandal, many blots on his character, still more disgust. In such heads ideas are like cannon balls: the man, hurled onwards, bursts through everything, shatters himself, begins again the next day, but in a contrary direction, and ends by finding nothing left, but ruins within and without him. Burns had never been prudent, and was so less than ever, after his success at Edinburgh. He had enjoyed too much; he henceforth felt too acutely the painful sting of modern man, to wit, the disproportion between desire and power. Debauch had all but spoiled his fine imagination, which had before been 'the chief source of his happiness;' and he confessed that, instead of tender reveries, he had now nothing but sensual desires. He had been kept drinking till six in the morning; he was very often drunk at Dumfries, not that the whisky was very good, but it raises a carnival in the head; and hence poets, like the poor, are fond of it. Once, at Mr. Riddell's, he made himself so tipsy that he insulted the lady of the house; next day he sent her an apology which was not accepted, and, out of spite, wrote rhymes against her: lamentable excess, betraying an unseated mind. At thirty-seven he was worn out. One night, having drunk too much, he sat down and went to sleep in the street. It was January, and he caught rheumatic fever. They wanted to call in a doctor. 'What business has a physician to waste his time on me?' he said; 'I am a poor pigeon not worth plucking.' He was horribly thin, could not sleep, and could not stand on his legs. 'As to my individual self, I am tranquil. But Burns' poor widow and half a dozen of his dear little ones, there I am as weak as a woman's tear.' He was even afraid he should not die in peace, and had the bitterness of being obliged to beg. Here is a letter he wrote to a friend:

'A rascal of a haberdasher, taking into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? Oh James! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me! Alas, I am not used to beg!'[1]

He died a few days afterwards, at thirty-eight. His wife was lying-in of her fifth child at the time of her husband's funeral.

II.

A sad life, most often the life of the men in advance of their age; it is not wholesome to go too quick. Burns was so much in advance, that it took forty years to catch him. At this moment in England, the Conservatives and the believers took the lead before sceptics and revolutionists. The constitution was liberal, and seemed to be a guarantee of rights; the church was popular, and seemed to be the support of morality.

[1] Chambers' *Life;* Letter to Mr. Js. Burnes, iv. 205.

Practical capacity and speculative incapacity turned the mind aside from the propounded innovations, and bound them down to the established order. The people found themselves well off in their great feudal house, widened and accommodated to modern needs; they thought it beautiful, they were proud of it; and national instinct, like public opinion, declared against the innovators who would throw it down to build it up again. Suddenly a violent shock changed this instinct into a passion, and this opinion into fanaticism. The French Revolution, at first admired as a sister, had shown itself a fury and a monster. Pitt declared in Parliament, 'that one of the leading features of this (French) Government was the extinction of religion and the destruction of property.'[1] Amidst universal applause, the whole thinking and influential class rose to stamp out this party of robbers, united brigands, atheists on principle; and Jacobinism, sprung from blood to sit in purple, was persecuted even in its child and champion 'Buonaparte, who is now the sole organ of all that was formerly dangerous and pestiferous in the revolution.'[2] Under this national rage liberal ideas dwindled; the most illustrious friends of Fox—Burke, Windham, Spencer—abandoned him: out of a hundred and sixty partisans in the House of Commons, only fifty remained to him. The great Whig party seemed to be disappearing; and in 1799, the strongest minority that could be collected against the Government was twenty-nine. Yet English Jacobinism was taken by the throat and held down:

'The *Habeas Corpus* Act was repeatedly suspended. . . . Writers who propounded doctrines adverse to monarchy and aristocracy, were proscribed and punished without mercy. It was hardly safe for a republican to avow his political creed over his beefsteak and his bottle of port at a chophouse. . . . Men of cultivated mind and polished manners were (in Scotland), for offences which at Westminster would have been treated as mere misdemeanours, sent to herd with felons at Botany Bay.'[3]

But the intolerance of the nation aggravated that of the Government. If any one had dared to avow democratic sentiments, he would have been insulted. The papers represented the innovators as wretches and public enemies. The mob in Birmingham burned the houses of Priestley and the Unitarians. In the end Priestley was obliged to leave England. Lord Byron exiled himself under the same constraint; and when he left, his friends feared that the crowd round his carriage would have laid hands on him.

New theories could not arise in this society armed against new theories. Yet the revolution made its entrance; it entered disguised, and through a byway, so as not to be recognised. It was not social ideas, as in France, that were transformed, nor philosophical ideas, as in

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[1] *The Speeches of William Pitt*, 2d ed. 3 vols. 1808, ii. 17, Jan. 21, 1794.
[2] *Ibid.* iii. 152, Feb. 17, 1800.
[3] Macaulay's Works, vii.; *Life of William Pitt*, 396.

Germany, but literary ideas; the great rising tide of the modern mind, which elsewhere overturned the whole edifice of human conditions and speculations, succeeded here only at first in changing style and taste. It was a slight change, at least apparently, but on the whole of equal value with the others; for this renovation in the manner of writing is a renovation in the manner of thinking: the one led to all the rest, as the movement of a central pivot constrains the movement of all the indented wheels.

Wherein consisted this reform of style? Before defining it, I prefer to exhibit it; and for that purpose, we must study the character and life of a man who was the first to use it, without any system—William Cowper: for his talent is but the picture of his character, and his poems but the echo of his life. He was a delicate, timid child, of a tremulous sensibility, passionately tender, who, having lost his mother at six, was almost at once subjected to the fagging and brutality of a public school. These, in England, are peculiar: a boy of about fifteen singled him out as a proper object upon whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper; and the poor little fellow, ceaselessly ill-treated, 'conceived,' he says, 'such a dread of his (tormentor's) figure, [illegible] that I well remember being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees; and that I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress.'[1] At the age of nine melancholy seized him, not the sweet reverie which we call by that name, but the profound dejection, gloomy and continual despair, the horrible malady of the nerves and the soul, which leads to suicide, Puritanism, and madness. 'Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair.'[2]

The evil changed form, diminished, but did not leave him. As he had only a small fortune, though born of a high family, he accepted, without reflection, the offer of his uncle, who wished to give him a place as clerk of the journals of the House of Lords; but he had to undergo an examination, and his nerves were unstrung at the very idea of having to speak in public. For six months he tried to prepare; but he read without understanding. His continual misery brought on at last a nervous fever. Cowper writes of himself:

'The feelings of a man when he arrives at the place of execution, are probably much like mine, every time I set my foot in the office, which was every day, for more than a half year together.'[3]

'In this situation, such a fit of passion has sometimes seized me, when alone in my chambers, that I have cried out aloud, and cursed the hour of my birth; lifting up my eyes to heaven not as a suppliant, but in the hellish spirit of rancorous reproach and blasphemy against my Maker.'[4]

The day of examination came on: he hoped he was going mad, so that he might escape from it; and as his reason held, he thought even of 'self-murder.' At last, whilst 'in a horrible dismay of soul,' insanity

[1] *The Works of W. Cowper*, ed. Southey, 8 vols. 1843, i. 5.
[2] *Ibid.* 18. [3] *Ibid.* 79. [4] *Ibid.* 81.

came, and he was placed in an asylum, whilst 'his conscience was scaring him, and the avenger of blood pursuing him'[1] to the extent even of thinking himself damned, like Bunyan and the first Puritans. After several months his reason returned, but it bore traces of the strange lands where it had journeyed alone. He remained sad, like a man who thought himself in disfavour with God, and felt himself incapable of an active life. However, a clergyman, Mr. Unwin and his wife, very pious and very regular people, had taken charge of him. He tried to busy himself mechanically, for instance, in making rabbit-hutches, in gardening, and in taming hares. He employed the rest of the day like a Methodist, in reading Scripture or sermons, in singing hymns with his friends, and speaking of spiritual matters. This way of living, the wholesome country air, the maternal tenderness of Mrs. Unwin and Lady Austin, brought him a few gleams of light. They loved him so generously, and he was so lovable! Affectionate, full of freedom and innocent raillery, with a natural and charming imagination, a graceful fancy, an exquisite delicacy, and so unhappy! He was one of those to whom women devote themselves, whom they love maternally, first from compassion, then by attraction, because they find in them alone the contrivances, minute and tender attentions, delicate observances which men's rude nature cannot give them, and which their more sensitive nature nevertheless craves. These sweet moments, however, did not last. He says:

'My mind has always a melancholy cast, and is like some pools I have seen, which, though filled with a black and putrid water, will nevertheless in a bright day reflect the sunbeams from their surface.'

He smiled as well as he could, but with effort; it was the smile of a sick man who knows himself incurable, and tries to forget it for an instant, at least to make others forget it:

'Indeed, I wonder that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellects, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state. His antic gesticulations would be unseasonable at any rate, but more specially so if they should distort the features of the mournful attendants into laughter. But the mind, long wearied with the sameness of a dull, dreary prospect, will gladly fix his eyes on any thing that may make a little variety in its contemplations, though it were but a kitten playing with her tail.'[2]

In fine, he had too delicate and too pure a heart: pious, irreproachable, austere, he thought himself unworthy of going to church, or even of praying to God. He says also:

'As for happiness, he that once had communion with his Maker must be more frantic than ever I was yet, if he can dream at finding it at a distance from Him.'[3]

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[1] *The Works of W. Cowper*, ed. Southey, i. 97.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 269; Letter to the Rev. John Newton, July 12, 1780.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 387; Letter to Rev. J. Newton, August 5, 1786.

Cowper states then:

'The heart of a Christian, mourning and yet rejoicing, (is) pierced with thorns, yet wreathed about with roses. I have the thorn without the rose. My brier is a wintry one; the flowers are withered, but the thorn remains.'

On his deathbed, when the clergyman told him to confide in the love of the Redeemer, who desired to save all men, he gave a passionate cry, begging him not to give him such consolations. He thought himself lost, and had thought so all his life. One by one, under this terror, all his faculties failed. Poor charming soul, perishing like a frail flower transplanted from a warm land to the snow: the world's temperature was too rough for it; and the moral law, which should have supported it, tore it with its thorns.

Such a man does not write for the pleasure of making a noise. He made verses as he painted or planed, to occupy himself, to distract his mind. His soul was overcharged; he need not go far for subjects. Picture this pensive figure, silently wandering and gazing along the banks of the Ouse. He gazes and dreams. A buxom peasant girl, with a basket on her arm; a distant cart slowly rumbling on behind, horses in a sweat; a shining spring, which polishes the blue pebbles,—this is enough to fill him with sensations and thoughts. He returned, sat in his little summer-house, as large as a sedan-chair, the window of which opened out upon a neighbour's orchard, and the door on a garden full of pinks, roses, and honeysuckle. In this nest he laboured. In the evening, beside his friend, whose needles were working for him, he read, or listened to the drowsy sounds without. Rhymes are born in such a life as this. It sufficed for him, and for their birth. He did not need a more violent career: less harmonious or monotonous, it would have upset him; impressions small to us, were great to him; and in a room, a garden, he found a world. In his eyes the smallest objects were poetical. It is evening; winter; the postman comes:

'The herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some.'[1]

At last we have the precious 'close-packed load;' we open it; we wish to hear the many noisy voices it brings from London and the universe:

'Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,

[1] *The Task*, iv.; *The Winter Evening*.

> And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
> Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
> That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in.'[1]

Then he unfolds the whole contents of the newspaper—politics, news, even advertisements—not as a mere realist, like so many writers of to-day, but as a poet; that is, as a man who discovers a beauty and harmony in the coal of a sparkling fire, or the movement of fingers over a piece of wool-work; for such is the poet's strange distinction. Objects not only spring up in his mind more powerful and more precise than they were of themselves; but also, once conceived, they are purified, ennobled, coloured like gross vapours, which, being transfigured by distance and light, change into silky clouds, lined with purple and gold. For him there is a charm in the rolling folds of the vapour sent up by the tea-urn, sweetness in the concord of guests assembled about the same table in the same house. This one expression, 'News from India,' causes him to see India itself, 'with her plumed and jewelled turban.'[2] The mere notion of 'excise' sets before his eyes 'ten thousand casks, for ever dribbling out their base contents, touched by the Midas finger of the State, (which) bleed gold for ministers to sport away.'[3] Strictly, nature is like a gallery of splendid and various pictures, which to us ordinary folk are always covered up with cloths. At most, now and then, a rent suffers us to imagine the beauties hid behind the monotonous curtains; but these curtains the poet raises, one and all, and sees a picture where we see but a covering. Such is the new truth which Cowper's poems brought to light. We know from him that we need no longer go to Greece, Rome, to the palaces, heroes, and academicians, to search for poetic objects. They are quite near us. If we see them not, it is because we do not know how to look for them; the fault is in our eyes, not in the things. We shall find poetry, if we wish, at our fireside, and amongst the beds of our kitchen-garden.[4]

Is the kitchen-garden indeed poetical? To-day, perhaps; but to-morrow, if my imagination is barren, I shall see there nothing but carrots and other kitchen stuff. It is my sensation which is poetic, which I must respect, as the most precious flower of beauty. Hence a new style. It is no longer a question, after the old oratorical fashion, of boxing up a subject in a regular plan, dividing it into symmetrical portions, arranging ideas into files, like the pieces on a draught-board. Cowper takes the first subject that comes to hand—one which Lady Austin gave him at hap-hazard—the *Sofa*, and speaks about it for a couple of pages; then he goes whither the bent of his mind leads him,

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[1] *The Task*, iv.; *The Winter Evening*. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

[4] Crabbe may also be considered one of the masters and renovators of poetry, but his style is too classical, and he has been rightly nicknamed 'a Pope in worsted stockings.'

describing a winter evening, a number of interiors and landscapes, mingling here and there all kinds of moral reflections, stories, dissertations, opinions, confidences, like a man who thinks aloud before the most intimate and beloved of his friends. 'The best didactic poems,' says Southey, 'when compared with the *Task*, are like formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery.'[1] This is his great poem, the *Task*. If we enter into details, the contrast is greater still. He does not seem to dream that he is being listened to; he only speaks to himself. He does not dwell on his ideas, to set them in relief, and make them stand out by repetitions and antitheses; he marks his sensation, and that is all. We follow it in him as it is born, and we see it rising from a former one, swelling, falling, remounting, as we see vapour issuing from a spring, and insensibly rising, unrolling, and developing its shifting forms. Thought, which in others was curdled and rigid, becomes here mobile and fluent; the rectilinear verse grows flexible; the noble vocabulary widens its scope to let in vulgar words of conversation and life. At length poetry has again become lifelike; we no longer listen to words, but we feel emotions; it is no longer an author, but a man who speaks. His life is there perfect, beneath its black lines, without falsehood or concoction; his whole effort is bent on removing falsehood and concoction. When he describes his little river, his dear Ouse, 'slow winding through a level plain of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,'[2] he sees it with his inner eye; and each word, cæsura, sound, answers to a change of that inner vision. It is so in all his verses; they are full of personal emotions, genuinely felt, never altered or disguised; on the contrary, fully expressed, with their transient shades and fluctuations; in a word, as they are, that is, in the process of production and destruction, not all complete, motionless, and fixed as the old style represented them. Herein consists the great revolution of the modern style. The mind, outstripping the known rules of rhetoric and eloquence, penetrates into profound psychology, and no longer employs words except to mark emotions.

III.

Now[3] appeared the English romantic school, closely resembling the French in its doctrines, origin, and alliances, in the truths which it discovered, the exaggerations it committed, and the scandal it excited. The followers of that school formed a sect, a sect of 'dissenters in poetry,' who spoke out aloud, kept themselves close together, and repelled settled minds by the audacity and novelty of their theories. For their foundation were attributed to them the anti-social principles and the sickly sensibility of Rousseau; in short, a sterile and misanthropical dissatisfaction with the present institutions of society. In fact, Southey, one of their leaders, had begun by being a Socinian and Jacobin; and one of his

[1] Southey, *Life of Cowper*, i. 341.

[2] *The Task*, i.; *The Sofa*.

[3] 1793–1794.

first poems, *Wat Tyler*, cited the glory of the past Jacquerie in support of the present revolution. Another, Coleridge, a poor fellow, who had served as a dragoon, his brain stuffed with incoherent reading and humanitarian dreams, had thought of founding in America a communist republic, purged of kings and priests; then, having turned Unitarian, steeped himself at Göttingen in heretical and mystical theories on the Word and the absolute. Wordsworth himself, the third and most moderate, had begun with enthusiastic verses against kings:

> 'Great God, . . . grant that every sceptred child of clay,
> Who cries presumptuous, "Here the flood shall stay,"
> May in its progress see thy guiding hand,
> And cease the acknowledged purpose to withstand;
> Or, swept in anger from the insulted shore,
> Sink with his servile bands, to rise no more!'[1]

But these rages and aspirations did not last long; and at the end of a few years, the three, brought back into the pale of State and Church, were, Coleridge, a Pittite journalist, Wordsworth, a distributor of stamps, and Southey, poet-laureate; all converted zealots, decided Anglicans, and intolerant Conservatives. In point of taste, however, they had advanced, not retired. They had violently broken with tradition, and leaped over all classical culture to find their models from the Renaissance and the middle-age. One of their friends, Charles Lamb, like Sainte-Beuve, had discovered and restored the sixteenth century. The most unpolished dramatists, like Marlowe, seemed to these men admirable; and they sought in the collections of Percy and Warton, in the old national ballads and ancient foreign poetry, the fresh and primitive accent which had been wanting in classical literature, and whose presence seemed to them to be a sign of truth and beauty. Above every other reform, they laboured to destroy the great aristocratical and oratorical style, such as it sprang from methodical analyses and court conventions, to adapt to poetry the ordinary language of conversation, such as is spoken in the middle and lower classes. They proposed to replace studied phrases and lofty vocabulary by natural tones and plebeian words. In place of the ancient mould, they tried the stanza, the sonnet, the ballad, blank verse, with the rudenesses and breaks of the primitive poets. They resumed or arranged the metres and diction of the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Charles Lamb wrote an archaic tragedy, *John Woodvill*, which one might fancy contemporary with Elizabeth's reign. Others, like Southey, and Coleridge in particular, manufactured totally new rhythms, as happy at times, and at times also as unfortunate, as those of Victor Hugo: for instance, a verse in which accents, and not syllables, were counted;[2] a singular medley of confused attempts, mani-

[1] Wordsworth's Works, new edition, 1870, 6 vols.; *Descriptive Sketches during a Pedestrian Tour*, i. 42.

[2] In English poetry as since modified, no one dreams of limiting the number of syllables, even in blank verse.—TR.

fest abortions, and original inventions. The plebeian, enfranchised from the aristocratical costume, sought another; borrowed one piece of his dress from the knights or the barbarians, another from peasants or journalists, not too critical of incongruities, pretentious, and satisfied with his motley and badly sewn cloak, till at last, after many attempts and many rents, he ended by knowing himself, and selecting the dress that fitted him.

In this confusion of labours two great ideas are distinguished: the first producing historical poetry, the second philosophical; the one especially manifest in Southey and Walter Scott, the other in Wordsworth and Shelley; both European, and displayed with equal brilliancy in France by Hugo, Lamartine, and Musset; with greater brilliancy in Germany by Goethe, Schiller, Ruckert, and Heine; both so profound, that none of their representatives, except Goethe, divined their scope; and hardly now, after more than half a century, can we define their nature, so as to forecast their results.

The first consists in saying, or rather foreboding, that our ideal is not the ideal; it is one ideal, but there are others. The barbarian, the feudal man, the cavalier of the Renaissance, the Mussulman, the Indian, each age and each race has conceived its beauty, which was a beauty. Let us enjoy it, and for this purpose put ourselves in the place of the discoverers; altogether; for it will not suffice to represent, like the previous novelists and dramatists, modern and national manners under old and foreign names; let us paint the sentiments of other ages and other races with their own features, however different these features may be from our own, and however unpleasing to our taste. Let us show our character as he was, grotesque or not, with his costume and speech: let him be fierce and superstitious if he was so; let us dash the barbarian with blood, and load the covenanter with his bundle of biblical texts. Then one by one on the literary stage men saw the vanished or distant civilisations return: first the middle age and the Renaissance; then Arabia, Hindostan, and Persia; then the classical age, and the eighteenth century itself; and the historic taste becomes so eager, that from literature the contagion spread to other arts. The theatre changed its conventional costumes and decorations into true ones. Architecture built Roman villas in our northern climates, and feudal towers amidst our modern security. Painters travelled to imitate local colouring, and studied to reproduce moral colouring. Every one became a tourist and an archæologist; the human mind, quitting its individual sentiments to adopt sentiments really felt, and finally all possible sentiments, found its pattern in the great Goethe, who by his *Tasso*, *Iphigenia*, *Divan*, his second part of *Faust*, became a citizen of all nations and a contemporary of all ages, seemed to live at pleasure at every point of time and place, and gave an idea of universal mind. Yet this literature, as it approached perfection, approached its limit, and was only developed in order to die. Men did comprehend at last that

attempted resurrections are always incomplete, that every imitation is only an imitation, that the modern accent infallibly penetrates the words which we lend to antique characters, that every picture of manners must be indigenous and contemporaneous, and that archaic literature is a false kind. They saw at last that it is in the writers of the past that we must seek the portraiture of the past; that there are no Greek tragedies but the Greek tragedies; that the concocted novel must give place to authentic memoirs, as the fabricated ballad to the spontaneous; in short, that historical literature must vanish and become transformed into criticism and history, that is, into exposition and commentary of documents.

In this multitude of travellers and historians, disguised as poets, how shall we select? They abound like swarms of insects, hatched on a summer's day amidst the rank vegetation; they buzz and glitter, and the mind is lost in their sparkle and hum. Which shall I quote? Thomas Moore, the gayest and most French of all, a witty railer,[1] too graceful and *recherché*, writing descriptive odes on the Bermudas, sentimental Irish melodies, a poetic Egyptian romance,[2] a romantic poem on Persia and India;[3] Lamb, the restorer of the old drama; Coleridge, a thinker and dreamer, poet and critic, who in *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner* hit the supernatural and the fantastic; Campbell, who, having begun with a didactic poem on the *Pleasures of Hope*, entered the new school without giving up his noble and half-classical style, and wrote American and Celtic poems, only slightly Celtic and American; in the first rank, Southey, a clever man, who, after several mistakes in his youth, became the professed defender of aristocracy and cant, an indefatigable reader, an inexhaustible writer, crammed with erudition, gifted in imagination, famed like Victor Hugo for the freshness of his innovations, the combative tone of his prefaces, the splendours of his picturesque curiosity, having spanned the universe and all history with his poetic shows, and embraced, in the endless web of his verse, Joan of Arc, Wat Tyler, Roderick the Goth, Madoc, Thalaba, Kehama, Celtic and Mexican traditions, Arabic and Indian legends, successively Catholic, Mussulman, Brahman, but only in verse; in fine, a prudent and licensed Protestant. You must receive these as examples merely—there are thirty others behind; and I think that, of all fine visible or imaginable sceneries, of all great real or legendary events, at all points of time, in the four quarters of the world, not one has escaped them. This diorama is very brilliant; unfortunately we perceive that it is manufactured. If you would have its picture, imagine yourself at the opera. The decorations are splendid, we see them coming down from heaven, that is, from the ceiling, thrice in an act; lofty Gothic cathedrals, whose rose-windows glow in the rays of the setting sun, whilst processions wind round the pillars, and the

[1] See *The Fudge Family.* [2] *The Epicurean.* [3] *Lalla Rookh.*

lights float over the elaborate copes and the gold-work of the priestly vestments; mosques and minarets, moving caravans creeping afar over the yellow sand, whose lances and canopies, ranged in line, fringe the immaculate whiteness of the horizon; Indian paradises, where the heaped roses multiply in myriads, where fountains mingle their plumes of pearls, where the lotus spreads its large leaves, where thorny plants bristle their hundred thousand purple calices around the divine apes and crocodiles which crawl in their thickets. Meantime the dancing-girls lay their hands on their heart with deep and delicate emotion, the tenors sing that they are ready to die, tyrants roll forth their deep bass voice, the orchestra struggles hard, accompanying the variations of sentiments with the gentle sounds of their flutes, the lugubrious clamours of the trombones, the angelic melodies of the harps; till at last, when the heroine sets her foot on the throat of the traitor, it breaks out triumphantly with its thousand vibrant voices harmonised into a single strain. A fine spectacle! we depart mazed, deafened; the senses fail under this inundation of splendours; but as we return home, we ask ourselves what we have learnt, felt—whether we have, in truth, felt anything. After all, there is little here but decorations and scenery; the sentiments are factitious; they are operatic sentiments: the authors are only clever men, libretti-makers, manufacturers of painted canvas; they have talent without genius; they draw their ideas not from the heart, but from the head. Such is the impression left by *Lalla Rookh*, *Thalaba*, *Roderick the last of the Goths*, *The Curse of Kehama*, and the rest of these poems. They are great decorative machines suited to the fashion. The mark of genius is the discovery of some wide unexplored region in human nature, and this mark fails them; they prove only much cleverness and knowledge. In fine, I prefer to see the East in Orientals from the East, rather than in Orientals in England; in Vyasa or Firdousi, rather than in Southey[1] and Moore. These poems may be descriptive or historical; they are less so than the texts, notes, emendations, and justifications which they carefully print at the foot of the page.

Beyond all general causes which have fettered this literature, there is a national one: the mind of these authors is not sufficiently flexible, and too moral. Their imitation is only literal. They know the past time and the distant lands only as antiquarians and travellers. When they mention a custom, they put their authorities in a foot-note; they do not present themselves before the public without being furnished with testimonials; they establish by weighty certificates that they have not made a fault in topography or costume. Moore, like Southey, named his authorities; Sir John Malcolm, Sir William Ouseley, Mr. Carew, and others, who had returned from the East, all ocular witnesses, state

[1] See also *The History of the Caliph Vathek*, a fantastic but powerfully written tale, by W. Beckford, published first in French in 1784.

that his descriptions are wonderfully faithful, that they thought that Moore had travelled in the East. In this respect their minuteness is ridiculous;[1] and their notes, lavished without stint, show that their positive public imposed on the poetical commodities the necessity of proving their origin and alloy. But the great truth, which lies in the penetration into the sentiments of the characters, escaped them; these sentiments are too strange and immoral. When Moore tried to translate and recast Anacreon, he was told that his poetry was fit for 'the stews.'[2] To write an Indian poem, we must be pantheistical at heart, a little mad, and pretty generally visionary: to write a Greek poem, we must be polytheistic at heart, fundamentally pagan, and a naturalist by profession. This is the reason that Heine spoke so fitly of India, and Goethe of Greece. A genuine historian is not sure that his own civilisation is perfect, and lives as gladly out of his country as in it. Judge whether Englishmen can succeed in this style. In their eyes, there is only one rational civilisation, which is their own; every other morality is inferior, every other religion is extravagant. Amidst such want of reason, how can they reproduce different moralities and religions? Sympathy alone can restore extinguished or foreign manners, and sympathy here is forbidden. Under this narrow rule, historical poetry, which itself is hardly likely to live, languishes as though suffocated under a leaden cover.

One of them, a novelist, critic, historian, and poet, the favourite of his age, read over the whole of Europe, was compared and almost equalled to Shakspeare, had more popularity than Voltaire, made dressmakers and duchesses weep, and earned about two hundred thousand pounds. Murray, the publisher, wrote to him: 'I believe I might swear that I never experienced such unmixed pleasure as the reading of this exquisite work (first series of *Tales of my Landlord*) has afforded me. . . . Lord Holland said, when I asked his opinion: "Opinion! we did none of us go to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout."'[3] In France, 1,400,000 of these novels were sold, and they continue to sell. The author, born in Edinburgh, was the son of a Writer to the Signet, learned in feudal law and ecclesiastical history, himself an advocate, then sheriff, and always fond of antiquities, especially national antiquities; so that by his family, education, person, he found the materials of his works and the stimulus for his talent. His past recollections were impressed on him at the age of three, in a farm-house, where he had been taken to try the effect of bracing air on his little shrunken leg. He was wrapt naked in the warm skin of a recently slain sheep, and he crept about in this attire, which passed for a specific. He continued to limp, and became a reader. From his infancy he had been bred amongst the stories which he afterwards gave

[1] See the notes of Southey, worse than those of Chateaubriand in the *Martyrs*.

[2] *Edinburgh Review*.

[3] Lockhart, *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 10 vols., 2d ed., 1839, ii. ch. xxxvii. p. 170.

to the public,—that of the battle of Culloden, of the cruelties practised on the Highlanders, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters. At three he used to sing out the ballad of Hardyknute so loudly, that he prevented the village minister, a man gifted with a very fine voice, from being heard, and even from hearing himself. As soon as he had heard 'a Border-raid ballad,' he knew it by heart. For the rest, he was indolent, studied by fits and starts, did not readily learn dry hard facts; but for poetry, playhouse-ditties, and ballads, the flow of his genius was precocious, swift, and invincible. The day on which he first opened, 'under a platanus tree,' the volumes in which Percy had collected the fragments of the ancient poetry, he forgot dinner, 'notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen,' and thenceforth he flooded with these old rhymes not only his schoolfellows, but even all who would hear him. Becoming a clerk to his father, he stuffed into his desk all the works of imagination which he could find. 'The whole Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy tribe I abhorred,' he said, 'and it required the art of Burney, or the feeling of Mackenzie, to fix my attention upon a domestic tale. But all that was adventurous and romantic, . . . that touched upon knight-errantry, I devoured.'[1] Having contracted an illness, he was kept a long time in bed, forbidden to speak, with no other pleasure than to read the poets, novelists, historians, and geographers, illustrating the battle descriptions by setting in line and disposing little pebbles, which represented the soldiers. Once cured and able to walk well, he turned his walks to the same purpose, and developed a passion for the country, especially the historical regions. He said:

'But show me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St. Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St. Andrews to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep.'[2]

Amidst other studious excursions, he travelled for seven years successively in the wild district of Liddesdale, exploring every stream and every ruin, sleeping in the shepherds' huts, gleaning legends and ballads. Judge from this of his antiquarian tastes and habits. He read provincial charters, the wretched middle-age Latin verses, the parish registers, even contracts and wills. The first time he was able to lay his hand on one of the great 'old Border war-horns,' he blew it all along his route. Rusty mail and dirty parchment attracted him, filled his head with recollections and poetry. In truth, he had a feudal mind, and always wished to be the founder of a distinct branch. Literary glory was only secondary; his talent was to him only as an instrument. He spent the vast sums which his prose

[1] Lockhart's *Life of Sir W. Scott;* Autobiography, i. 62. [2] *Ibid.* i. 72.

and verse had won, in building a castle in imitation of the ancient knights, 'with a tall tower at either end, . . . sundry zigzagged gables, . . . a myriad of indentations and parapets, and machicollated eaves; most fantastic waterspouts; labelled windows, not a few of them painted glass; . . . stones carved with heraldries innumerable;'[1] apartments filled with sideboards and carved chests, adorned with 'cuirasses, helmets, swords of every order, from the claymore and rapier to some German executioner's swords.' For long years he held open house there, so to speak, and did to every stranger the 'honours of Scotland,' trying to revive the old feudal life, with all its customs and its display; dispensing open and joyous hospitality to all comers, above all to relatives, friends, and neighbours; singing ballads and sounding pibrochs amidst the clinking of glasses; holding gay hunting-parties, where the yeomen and gentlemen rode side by side; and encouraging lively dances, where the lord was not ashamed to give his hand to the miller's daughter. He himself, open, happy, amidst his forty guests, kept up the conversation with a profusion of stories, lavished from his vast memory and imagination, conducted his guests over his domain, extended at large cost, amidst new plantations whose future shade was to shelter his posterity; and he thought with a poet's smile of the distant generations who would acknowledge for ancestor Sir Walter Scott, first baronet of Abbotsford.

The Lady of the Lake, *Marmion*, *The Lord of the Isles*, *The Fair Maid of Perth*, *Old Mortality*, *Ivanhoe*, *Quentin Durward*, who does not know these names by heart? From Walter Scott we learned history. And yet is this history? All these pictures of a distant age are false. Costumes, scenery, externals alone are exact; actions, speech, sentiments, all the rest is civilised, embellished, arranged in modern guise. We might suspect it when looking at the character and life of the author; for what does he desire, and what do the guests, eager to hear him, demand? Is he a lover of truth as it is, foul and fierce; an inquisitive explorer, indifferent to contemporary applause, bent alone on defining the transformations of living nature? By no means. He is in history, as he is at Abbotsford, bent on arranging points of view and Gothic halls. The moon will come in well there between the towers; here is a nicely placed breastplate, the ray of light which it throws back is pleasant to see above these old hangings; suppose we took out the feudal garments from the wardrobe and invited the guests to a masquerade? The entertainment would be a fine one, agreeable with their reminiscences and their aristocratic principles. English lords, fresh from a bitter war against French democracy, ought to enter zealously into this commemoration of their ancestors. Moreover, there are ladies and young girls, and we must arrange the show, so as not to shock their severe morality and their delicate feelings, make them weep

[1] Lockhart's *Life of Sir W. Scott*, vii.; Abbotsford in 1825.

becomingly; not put on the stage over-strong passions, which they would not understand; on the contrary, select heroines to resemble them, always touching, but above all correct; young gentlemen, Evandale, Morton, Ivanhoe, irreproachably brought up, tender and grave, even slightly melancholic (it is the latest fashion), and worthy to lead them to the altar. Is there a man more suited than the author to compose such a spectacle? He is a good Protestant, a good husband, a good father, very moral, so decided a Tory, that he carries off as a relic a glass from which the king has just drunk. In addition, he has neither talent nor leisure to reach the depth of his characters. He devotes himself to the exterior; he sees and describes forms and externals much more at length than feelings and internals. Again, he treats his mind like a coal-mine, serviceable for quick working, and for the greatest possible gain: a volume in a month, sometimes in a fortnight even, and this volume is worth one thousand pounds. How should he discover, or how dare exhibit, the structure of barbarous souls? This structure is too difficult to discover, and too little pleasing to show. Every two centuries, amongst men, the proportion of images and ideas, the source of passions, the degree of reflection, the species of inclinations, change. Who, without a long preliminary training, now understands and relishes Dante, Rabelais, and Rubens? And how, for instance, could these great Catholic and mystical dreams, these vast temerities, or these impurities of carnal art, find entrance into the head of this gentlemanly citizen? Walter Scott pauses on the threshold of the soul, and in the vestibule of history, selects in the Renaissance and the Middle-age only the fit and agreeable, blots out frank language, licentious sensuality, bestial ferocity. After all, his characters, to whatever age he transports them, are his neighbours, 'cannie' farmers, vain lairds, gloved gentlemen, young marriageable ladies, all more or less commonplace, that is, well-ordered by education and character, hundreds of miles away from the voluptuous fools of the Restoration, or the heroic brutes and fierce beasts of the Middle-age. As he has the richest supply of costumes, and the most inexhaustible talent for scenic effect, he makes his whole world get on very pleasantly, and composes tales which, in truth, have only the merit of fashion, but which yet may last a hundred years.

That which he himself acted lasted for a briefer time. To sustain his princely hospitality and his feudal magnificence, he had gone into partnership with his printers; lord of the manor in public and merchant in private, he had given them his signature, without keeping a check over the use they made of it. Bankruptcy followed; at the age of fifty-five he was ruined, and one hundred and seventeen thousand pounds in debt. With admirable courage and uprightness, he refused all favour, accepting nothing but time, set to work on the very day, wrote untiringly, in four years paid seventy thousand pounds, exhausted his brain so as to become paralytic, and to perish in the attempt.

Neither in his conduct nor his literature did his feudal tastes succeed, and his manorial splendour was as fragile as his Gothic imaginations. He had relied on imitation, and we live by truth only; his glory lay elsewhere; and there was something solid in his mind as in his writings. Beneath the lover of the Middle-age we find, first the prudent Scotchman, an attentive observer, whose sharpness has become more intense by his familiarity with law; a good man too, easy and gay, as beseems the national character, so different from the English. One of his walking companions (Shortreed) said:

'Eh me, sic an endless fund o' humour and drollery as he had wi' him! Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped, how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody! He aye did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man, or took ony airs in the company.'[1]

Grown older and graver, he was none the less amiable; the most agreeable of hosts, so that one of his guests, a farmer, I think, on leaving his house, said to his wife, that he was going to bed, and should like to sleep for a whole twelve months, for that there was only one thing in this world worth living for, namely, hunting at Abbotsford.

In addition to a mind of this kind, he had all-discerning eyes, an all-retentive memory, a ceaseless studiousness which comprehended the whole of Scotland, all conditions; and you see his true talent arise, so abundant and so easy, made up of minute observation and sweet raillery, recalling at once Teniers and Addison. Doubtless he wrote badly, at times in the worst possible manner:[2] it is clear that he dictated, hardly re-read his writing, and readily fell into a pasty and emphatic style,—a style indigenous to the atmosphere, and which we read day after day in prospectuses and newspapers. What is worse, he is terribly long and diffuse; his conversations and descriptions are interminable; he is determined, at all events, to fill three volumes. But he has given to Scotland a citizenship of literature—I mean to Scotland altogether: scenery, monuments, houses, cottages, characters of every age and condition, from the baron to the fisherman, from the advocate to the beggar, from the lady to the fishwife. At his name alone they crowd forward; who does not see them coming from every niche of memory? The Baron of Bradwardine, Dominie Sampson, Meg Merrilies, the Antiquary, Edie Ochiltree, Jeanie Deans and her father,—innkeepers, shopkeepers, old wives, an entire people. What Scotch features are absent? Saving, patient, 'cannie,' cunning, necessarily; the poverty

[1] Lockhart's *Life*, i. ch. vii. 269.

[2] See the opening of *Ivanhoe:* 'Such being our chief scene, the date of our story refers to a period towards the end of the reign of Richard I., when his return from his long captivity had become an event rather wished than hoped for by his despairing subjects, who were in the meantime subjected to every species of subordinate oppression.' It is impossible to write in a heavier style.

of the soil and the difficulty of existence has compelled them to it: this is the specialty of the race. The same tenacity which they introduced into everyday affairs they have introduced into mental concerns, —studious readers and perusers of antiquities and controversies, poets also; legends spring up readily in a romantic land, amidst time-honoured wars and brigandism. In a land thus prepared, and in this gloomy clime, Presbyterianism fixed its sharp roots. Such was the real and modern world, enlightened by the far-setting sun of chivalry, as Sir Walter Scott found it; like a painter who, passing from great show-pictures, finds interest and beauty in the shops of a paltry provincial town, or in a farm surrounded by beds of beetroots and turnips. A continuous archness throws its smile over these pictures of interiors and of peculiarities, so local and minute, which, like the Flemish, indicate the rise of a bourgeoisie. Most of these good folk are comic. Our author makes fun of them, brings out their little deceits, parsimony, fooleries, vulgarity, and the hundred thousand circumstances of ridicule with which their narrow sphere of life never fails to endow them. A barber, in *The Antiquary*, makes heaven and earth turn about his wigs; if the French Revolution takes root everywhere, it was because the magistrates renounced this ornament. He cries out in a lamentable voice:

'Haud a care, haud a care, Monkbarns; God's sake, haud a care!—Sir Arthur's drowned already, and an' ye fa' over the cleugh too, there will be but ae wig left in the parish, and that's the minister's.'[1]

Mark how the author smiles, and without malevolence: the barber's candid selfishness is the effect of the man's calling, and does not repel us. Walter Scott is never bitter; he loves men from the bottom of his heart, excuses or tolerates them; does not chastise vices, but unmasks them, and that not rudely. His greatest pleasure is to pursue at length, not indeed a vice, but a hobby; the mania for odds and ends in an antiquary, the archæological vanity of the Baron of Bradwardine, the aristocratic drivel of the Dowager Lady Tillietudlem,—that is the amusing exaggeration of sane permissible taste; and this without anger, because, on the whole, these ridiculous people are estimable, and even generous. Even in rogues like Dirck Hatteraick, in cut-throats like Bothwell, he allows some goodness. In no one, not even Major Dalgetty, a professional murderer, a production of the thirty years' war, is the odious unveiled by the ridiculous. In this critical refinement and this benevolent philosophy, he resembles Addison.

He resembles him again by the purity and endurance of his moral principles. His assistant, Mr. Laidlaw, told him that he was doing great good by his attractive and noble tales, and that young people would no longer wish to look in the literary rubbish of the circulating libraries. When Walter Scott heard this, his eyes filled with tears:

'On his deathbed he said to his son-in-law: "Lockhart, I may have but a

[1] Sir Walter Scott's Works, 48 vols., 1829; *The Antiquary*, ch. viii.

minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous, be religious—be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here."'[1]

This was almost his last word. By this fundamental honesty and this wide humanity, he was the Homer of modern citizen life. Around and after him, the novel of manners, separated from the historical romance, has produced a whole literature, and preserved the character which he stamped upon it. Miss Austin, Miss Brontë, Mistress Gaskell, George Eliot, Bulwer, Thackeray, Dickens, and many others, paint, especially or entirely in his style, contemporary life, as it is, unembellished, in all ranks, often amongst the people, more frequently still amongst the middle class. And the causes which made the historical novel come to naught, in him and others, made the novel of manners, in him and others, succeed. These men were too minute copyists and too decided moralists, incapable of the great divinations and the wide sympathies which unlock the door of history; their imagination was too literal, and their judgment too decided. It is precisely by these faculties that they created a new species of novel, which multiplies to this day in thousands of offshoots, with such abundance, that men of talent in this respect may be counted by hundreds, and that we can only compare them, for their original and national sap, to the great age of Dutch painting. Realistic and moral, these are their two features. They are far removed from the great imagination which creates and transforms, as it appeared in the Renaissance or in the seventeenth century, in the heroic or noble ages. They renounce free invention; they narrow themselves to scrupulous exactitude; they paint with infinite detail costumes and places, changing nothing; they mark little shades of language; they are not disgusted by vulgarities or platitudes. Their information is authentic and precise. In short, they write like citizens for fellow-citizens, that is, for well-ordered people, members of a profession, whose imagination looks upon the earth, and sees things through a magnifying glass, unable to relish anything in the way of a picture except interiors and make-believes. Ask a cook which picture she prefers in the Museum, and she will point to a kitchen, in which the stewpans are so well painted that one is tempted to mix the soup in them. Yet beyond this inclination, which is now European, Englishmen have a special craving, which with them is national, and dates from the preceding century: they desire that the novel, like the rest, should contribute to their great work,—the amelioration of man and society. They ask from it the glorification of virtue, and the chastisement of vice. They send it into all the corners of civil society, and all the events of private history, in search of documents and expedients, to learn thence the means of remedying abuses, succouring miseries, avoiding temptations. They make of it an instrument of inquiry, education, and morality. A singular work, which has not its equal in

[1] Lockhart's *Life*, x. 217.

all history, because in all history there has been no society like it, and which—middling to lovers of the beautiful, admirable to lovers of the useful—offers, in the countless variety of its painting, and the invariable fixity of its spirit, the picture of the only democracy which knows how to restrain, govern, and reform itself.

IV.

Side by side with this development there was another, and with history philosophy entered into literature, in order to widen and modify it. It was manifest throughout, on the threshold as in the centre. On the threshold it had planted æsthetics: every poet, becoming theoretic, defined before producing the beautiful, laid down principles in his preface, and originated only after a preconceived system. But the ascendency of metaphysics was much more visible in the middle of the work than on its threshold; for not only did it prescribe the form of poetry, but it furnished it with its elements. What is man, and what has he come into the world to do? What is this far-off greatness to which he aspires? Is there a haven which he may reach, and a hidden hand to conduct him thither? These are the questions which poets, transformed into thinkers, agreed to agitate; and Goethe, here as elsewhere the father and promoter of all lofty modern ideas, at once sceptical, pantheistic, and mystic, wrote in *Faust* the epic of the age and the history of the human mind. Need I say that in Schiller, Heine, Beethoven, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, and de Musset, the poet, in his individual person, always speaks the words of the universal man? The characters which they have created, from *Faust* to *Ruy Blas*, only served them to exhibit some great metaphysical and social idea; and twenty times this too great idea, bursting its narrow envelope, broke out beyond all human likelihood and all poetic form, to display itself to the eyes of the spectators. Such was the domination of the philosophical spirit, that, after doing violence to literature, or rendering it rigid, it imposed on music humanitarian ideas, inflicted on painting symbolical designs, penetrated current speech, and marred style by an overflow of abstractions and formulas, from which all our efforts now fail to liberate us. As an overstrong child, which at its birth injures its mother, so it has contorted the noble forms which had endeavoured to contain it, and dragged literature through an agony of anguish and of efforts.

This philosophical spirit was not born in England, and from Germany to England the passage was very long. For a considerable time it appeared dangerous or ridiculous. One of the reviews stated even, that Germany was a large country peopled by hussars and classical scholars; that if folks go there, they will see at Heidelberg a very large tun, and could feast on excellent Rhine wine and Westphalian ham, but that their authors were very heavy and awkward, and that a sentimental German resembles a tall and stout butcher crying over a killed calf. If at length German literature found entrance, first by the

attractiveness of extravagant dramas and fantastic ballads, than by the sympathy of the two nations, which, allied against French policy and civilisation, acknowledged their cousinship in speech, religion, and blood, the German metaphysician stood at the door, unable to overturn the barrier which the positive mind and the national literature opposed to him. He was seen trying to pass, in Coleridge for instance, a philosophic theologian and dreamy poet, who toiled to widen conventional dogma, and who, at the close of his life, having become a sort of oracle, endeavoured, in the pale of the Church, to unfold and unveil before a few faithful disciples the Christianity of the future. It did not make head; the English mind was too positive, the theologians too enslaved. It was constrained to transform itself and become Anglican, or to deform itself and become revolutionary; and, in place of a Schiller and Goethe, to produce a Wordsworth, a Byron, a Shelley.

The first, a new Cowper, with less talent and more ideas than the other, was essentially an interior man, that is, engrossed by the concerns of the soul. Such men ask what they have come to do in this world, and why life has been given to them; if they are just or unjust, and if the secret movements of their heart are conformable to the supreme law, without taking into account the visible causes of their conduct. Such, for men of this kind, is the master conception which renders them serious, meditative, and as a rule gloomy.[1] They live with eyes turned inwards, not to mark and classify their ideas, like physiologists, but as moralists, to approve or blame their feelings. Thus understood, life becomes a grave business, of uncertain issue, on which we must incessantly and scrupulously reflect. Thus understood, the world changes its aspect; it is no longer a machine of wheels working in each other, as the philosopher says, nor a splendid blooming plant, as the artist feels,—it is the work of a moral being, displayed as a spectacle to moral beings.

Figure such a man facing life and the world; he sees them, and takes part in it, apparently like any one else; but how different he is in reality! His great thought pursues him; and when he beholds a tree, it is to meditate on human destiny. He finds or lends a sense to the least objects: a soldier marching to the sound of the drum makes him reflect on heroic sacrifice, the support of societies; a train of clouds lying heavily on the verge of a gloomy sky, endues him with that melancholy calm, so suited to nourish moral life. There is nothing which does not recall him to his duty and admonish him of his origin. Near or far, like a great mountain in a landscape, his philosophy will appear behind all his ideas and images. If he is restless, impassioned, sick with scruples, it will appear to him amidst storm and lightning, as it did to the genuine Puritans, to Cowper, Pascal, Carlyle. It will

[1] The Jansenists, the Puritans, and the Methodists are the extremes of this class.

appear to him in a grey fog, imposing and calm, if he enjoys, like Wordsworth, a calm mind and a pleasant life. Wordsworth was a wise and happy man, a thinker and a dreamer, who read and walked. He was from the first in tolerably easy circumstances, and had a small fortune. Happily married, amidst the favours of government and the respect of the public, he lived peacefully on the margin of a beautiful lake, in sight of noble mountains, in the pleasant retirement of an elegant house, amidst the admiration and attentions of distinguished and chosen friends, engrossed by contemplations which no storm came to distract, and by poetry, which was produced without any hindrance. In this deep calm he listens to his own thoughts; the peace was so great, within him and around him, that he could perceive the imperceptible. 'To me, the meanest flower that blows, can give thoughts that too often lie too deep for tears.' He saw a grandeur, a beauty, lessons in the trivial events which weave the woof of our most commonplace days. He needed not, for the sake of emotion, either splendid sights or unusual actions. The dazzling glare of the lamps, the pomp of the theatre, would have shocked him; his eyes are too delicate, accustomed to sweet and uniform tints. He was a poet of the twilight. Moral existence in commonplace existence, such was his object—the object of his preference. His paintings are cameos with a grey ground, which have a meaning; designedly he suppresses all which might please the senses, in order to speak solely to the heart.

Out of this character sprang a theory,—his theory of art, altogether spiritualistic, which, after repelling classical habits, ended by rallying Protestant sympathies, and won for him as many partisans as it had raised enemies.[1] Since the only important thing is moral life, let us devote ourselves solely to nourishing it. The reader must be moved, genuinely, with profit to his soul; the rest is indifferent: let us, then, show him objects moving in themselves, without dreaming of clothing them in a beautiful style. Let us strip ourselves of conventional language and poetic diction. Let us neglect noble words, scholastic and courtly epithets, and all the pomp of factitious splendour, which the classical writers thought themselves bound to assume, and justified in imposing. In poetry, as elsewhere, the grand question is, not ornament, but truth. Let us leave show, and seek effect. Let us speak in a bare style, as like as possible to prose, to ordinary conversation, even to rustic conversation, and let us choose our subjects at hand, in humble life. Let us take for our character an idiot boy, a shivering old peasant woman, a hawker, a servant stopping in the street. It is the true sentiment, not the dignity of the folks, which makes the beauty of a subject; it is the true sentiment, not the dignity of the words, which makes the beauty of poetry. What matters that it is a villager who weeps, if these tears enable me to see the maternal sentiment? What

[1] See the preface of his second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*.

matters that my verse is a line of rhymed prose, if this line displays a noble emotion? You read that you may carry away emotions, not phrases; you come to us to look for a moral culture, not pretty ways of speaking. And thereon Wordsworth, classifying his poems according to the different faculties of men and the different ages of life, undertakes to lead us through all compartments and degrees of inner education, to the convictions and sentiments which he has himself attained.

All this is very well, but on condition that the reader is in his own position; that is, an essentially moral philosopher, and an excessively sensitive man. When I shall have emptied my head of all worldly thoughts, and looked up at the clouds for ten years to refine my soul, I shall love this poetry. Meanwhile the web of imperceptible threads by which Wordsworth endeavours to bind together all sentiments and embrace all nature, breaks in my fingers; it is too fragile; it is a woof of woven spider-web, spun by a metaphysical imagination, and tearing as soon as a solid hand tries to touch it. Half of his pieces are childish, almost foolish;[1] dull events described in a dull style, one nullity after another, and that on principle. All the poets in the world would not reconcile us to so much tedium. Certainly a cat playing with three dry leaves may furnish a philosophical reflection, and figure forth a wise man sporting with the fallen leaves of life; but eighty lines on such a subject make us yawn—much worse, smile. At this rate you will find a lesson in an old tooth-brush, which still continues in use. Doubtless, also, the ways of Providence are unfathomable, and a selfish and brutal workman like Peter Bell may be converted by the beautiful conduct of an ass full of virtue and unselfishness; but this sentimental prettiness quickly grows insipid, and the style, by its intentional ingenuousness, renders it still more insipid. We are not over-pleased to see a grave man seriously imitate the language of nurses, and we murmur to ourselves that, with so many emotions, he must wet many handkerchiefs. We will acknowledge, if you like, that your sentiments are interesting; yet you might do, without trotting them all out before us.

We imagine we hear him say: 'Yesterday I read Walton's *Complete Angler;* let us write a sonnet about it. On Easter Sunday I was in a valley in Westmoreland; another sonnet. Two days ago I put too many questions to my little boy, and caused him to tell a lie; a poem. I am going to travel on the Continent and through Scotland; poems about all the incidents, monuments, adventures of the journey.'

You must consider your emotions very precious, that you put them all under glass? There are only three or four events in each of our lives worthy of being related; our powerful sensations deserve to be exhibited, because they recapitulate our whole existence; but not the little effects of the little agitations which pass through us, and the im-

[1] *Peter Bell; The White Doe; The Kitten and Falling Leaves,* etc.

perceptible oscillations of our everyday condition. Else I might end by explaining in rhyme that yesterday my dog broke his leg, and that this morning my wife put on her stockings inside out. The specialty of the artist is to cast great ideas in moulds as great as they; Wordsworth's moulds are of bad common clay, notched, unable to hold the noble metal which they ought to contain.

But the metal is genuinely noble; and besides several very beautiful sonnets, there is now and then a work, amongst others *The Excursion*, in which we forget the poverty of the scenery to admire the purity and elevation of the thought. In truth, the author hardly puts himself to the trouble of imagination; he walked along and conversed with an old Scotch pedlar: this is the whole of the history. The poets of this school always walked, regarding nature and thinking of human destiny; it is their permanent attitude. He converses, then, with the pedlar, a meditative character, who had become educated by a long experience of men and things, who spoke very well (too well!) of the soul and of God, and relates to him the history of a good woman who died of grief in her cottage; then with a solitary, a sort of sceptical Hamlet—morose, made gloomy by the death of his family, and the deceptions of his long journeyings; then with the clergyman, who brought them to the village cemetery, and described to them the life of several interesting dead people. Observe that, *passim* and gradually, reflections and moral discussions, scenery and moral descriptions, spread before us in hundreds, dissertations entwine their long thorny hedgerows, and metaphysical thistles multiply in every corner. In short, the poem is grave and sad as a sermon. Well! in spite of this ecclesiastical air and the tirades against Voltaire and his age,[1] we feel ourselves impressed as by a discourse of Theodore Jouffroy. After all, the man is convinced; he has spent his life meditating on these kinds of ideas, they are the poetry of his religion, race, climate; he is imbued with them; his pictures, stories, interpretations of visible nature and human life tend only to put the mind in the grave disposition which is proper to the inner man. I come here as into the valley of Port Royal: a solitary nook, stagnant waters, gloomy woods, ruins, gravestones, and above all the idea of responsible man, and the obscure beyond, to which we involuntarily move. I forget the careless French fashions, the custom of not disturbing the even tenor of life. There is an imposing seriousness, an austere beauty in this sincere reflection; respect comes in, we stop and are touched. This book is like a Protestant temple, august, though bare and monotonous. The poet sets forth the great interests of the soul:

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[1] This dull product of a scoffer's pen
Impure conceits discharging from a heart
Hardened by impious pride!
Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, viii.; *The Excursion*, book 2; *The Solitary*, 58

'On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.
—To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself,—
I would give utterance in numerous verse.
Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,
And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual Mind that keeps her own
Inviolate retirement, subject there
To Conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all—
I sing.'[1]

This inviolate personage, the only holy part of man, is holy in all stages; for this, Wordsworth selects as his characters a pedlar, a parson, villagers; in his eyes condition, education, habits, all the worldly envelope of a man, is without interest; what constitutes our worth is the integrity of our conscience; science itself is only profound when it penetrates moral life; for this life fails nowhere:

'To every Form of being is assigned . . .
An *active* principle:—howe'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures; in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
The moving waters, and the invisible air.
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.'[2]

Reject, then, with disdain this arid science:

'Where Knowledge, ill begun in cold remarks
On outward things, with formal inference ends;

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[1] Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, vii.; *The Excursion*, Preface, 11.
[2] *Ibid.* vii. book 9, *Discourse of the Wanderer*, opening verses, 315.

Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils,
At once—or, not recoiling, is perplexed—[1]
Lost in a gloom of uninspired research. . . .
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnexion dead and spiritless;
And still dividing, and dividing still,
Breaks down all grandeur.'[2]

Beyond the vanities of science and the pride of the world, there is the soul, whereby all are equal, and the broad and familiar Christian life opens at once its gates to all who would enter:

'The sun is fixed,
And the infinite magnificence of heaven
Fixed within reach of every human eye.
The sleepless Ocean murmurs for all ears,
The vernal field infuses fresh delight
Into all hearts. . . .
The primal duties shine aloft like stars,
The charities that soothe and heal and bless
Are scattered at the feet of man—like flowers.'

So, at the end of all agitation and all search appears the great truth, which is the abstract of the rest:

'Life, I repeat, is energy of love
Divine or human; exercised in pain,
In strife and tribulation; and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.'[3]

The verses sustain these serious thoughts by their grave harmony, as it were a motet accompanying a meditation or a prayer. They resemble the grand and monotonous music of the organ, which in the eventide, at the close of the service, rolls slowly in the twilight of arches and pillars.

When a certain phasis of the human intelligence comes to light, it does so from all sides; there is no part where it does not appear, no instincts which it does not renew. It enters simultaneously the two opposite camps, and seems to undo with one hand what it has made with the other. If it is, as it was formerly, the oratorical style, we find it at the same time in the service of cynical misanthropy, and in that of decorous humanity, in Swift and in Addison. If it is, as now, the philosophical spirit, it produces at once conservative harangues and socialistic utopias, Wordsworth and Shelley.[4] The latter, one of the greatest poets of the age, son of a rich baronet, beautiful as an angel, of extraordinary precocity, sweet, generous, tender, overflowing with all the gifts of heart, mind, birth, and fortune, marred his life,

[1] Wordsworth's Works, 7 vols. 1849, vii.; *The Excursion*, book 4; *Despondency Corrected*, 137.

[2] *Ibid.* 149.

[3] *Ibid.* last lines of book 5, *The Pastor*, 20.

[4] See also the novels of Goodwin, *Caleb Williams*.

as it were, wantonly, by introducing into his conduct the enthusiastic imagination which he should have kept for his verses. From his birth he had 'the vision' of sublime beauty and happiness, and the contemplation of the ideal world set him in arms against the actual. Having refused at Eton to be the fag of the big boys, he was treated by the boys and the masters with a revolting cruelty; suffered himself to be made a martyr, refused to obey, and, falling back into forbidden studies, began to form the most immoderate and most poetical dreams. He judged society by the oppression which he underwent, and man by the generosity which he felt in himself; thought that man was good, and society bad, and that it was only necessary to suppress established institutions to make earth 'a paradise.' He became a republican, a communist, preached fraternity, love, even abstinence from flesh, and as a means the abolition of kings, priests, and God.[1] Fancy the indignation which such ideas roused in a society so obstinately attached to established order—so intolerant, in which, above the conservative and religious instincts, Cant spoke like a master. He was expelled from the university; his father refused to see him; the Lord Chancellor, by a decree, took from him, as being unworthy, the custody of his two children; finally, he was obliged to quit England. I forgot to say that at eighteen he married a girl of mean birth, that they had been separated, that she committed suicide, that he had undermined his health by his excitement and sufferings,[2] and that to the end of his life he was nervous or sick. Is not this the life of a genuine poet? Eyes fixed on the splendid apparitions with which he peopled space, he went through the world not seeing the high road, stumbling over the stones of the roadside. That knowledge of life which most poets have in common with novelists, he had not. Seldom has a mind been seen in which thought soared in loftier regions, and more far from actual things. When he tried to create characters and events—in *Queen Mab*, in *Alastor*, in *The Revolt of Islam*, in *Prometheus*—he only produced unsubstantial phantoms. Once only, in the *Cenci*, did he inspire a living figure worthy of Webster or old Ford; but in some sort in spite of himself, and because in it the sentiments were so unheard of and so strained that they suited superhuman conceptions. Elsewhere his world is throughout beyond our own. The laws of life are suspended or transformed. We move in this world between heaven and earth, in abstraction, dreamland, symbolism: the beings float in it like those fantastic figures which we see in the clouds, and which alternately undulate and change form capriciously, in their robes of snow and gold.

For souls thus constituted, the great consolation is nature. They are too fairly sensitive to find a distraction in the spectacle and pic-

[1] *Queen Mab*, and notes. At Oxford Shelley issued a kind of thesis, calling it 'On the Necessity of Atheism.'

[2] Some time before his death, when he was twenty-nine, he said, 'If I die now, I shall have lived as long as my father.'

ture of human passions. Shelley instinctively avoided it; this sight re-opened his own wounds. He was happier in the woods, at the sea-side, in contemplation of grand landscapes. The rocks, clouds, and meadows, which to ordinary eyes seem dull and insensible, are, to a wide sympathy, living and divine existences, which are an agreeable change from men. No virgin smile is so charming as that of the dawn, nor any joy more triumphant than that of the ocean when its waves creep and tremble, as far as the eye can see, under the prodigal splendour of heaven. At this sight the heart rises unwittingly to the sentiments of ancient legends, and the poet perceives in the inexhaustible bloom of things the peaceful soul of the great mother by whom everything grows and is supported. Shelley spent most of his life in the open air, especially in his boat; first on the Thames, then on the Lake of Geneva, then on the Arno, and in the Italian waters. He loved desert and solitary places, where man enjoys the pleasure of believing infinite what he sees, infinite as his soul. And such was this wide ocean, and this shore more barren than its waves. This love was a deep Germanic instinct, which, allied to pagan emotions, produced his poetry, pantheistic and yet pensive, almost Greek and yet English, in which fancy plays like a foolish, dreamy child, with the splendid skein of forms and colours. A cloud, a plant, a sunrise,—these are his characters: they were those of the primitive poets, when they took the lightning for a bird of fire, and the clouds for the flocks of heaven. But what a secret ardour beyond these splendid images, and how we feel the heat of the furnace beyond the coloured phantoms, which it sets afloat over the horizon![1] Has any one since Shakspeare and Spenser lighted on such tender and such grand ecstasies? Has any one painted so magnificently the cloud which watches by night in the sky, enveloping in its net the swarm of golden bees, the stars:

> 'The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
> And his burning plumes outspread,
> Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
> When the morning star shines dead . . .[2]
> That orbed maiden, with white fire laden,
> Whom mortals call the moon,
> Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
> By the midnight breezes strewn.'[3]

Read again those verses on the garden, in which the sensitive plant dreams. Alas! they are the dreams of the poet, and the happy visions which floated in his virgin heart up to the moment when it opened out and withered. I will pause in time; I will not proceed, like him, beyond the recollections of his spring-time:

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[1] See in Shelley's Works, 1853, *The Witch of Atlas*, *The Cloud*, *To a Skylark*, the end of *The Revolt of Islam*, *Alastor*, and the whole of *Prometheus*.

[2] *The Cloud*, c. iii. 502.

[3] *Ibid.* c. iv. 503.

'The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness.

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale,
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweat peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addrest,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare;

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Mænad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through the clear dew on the tender sky . . .

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was prankt, under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells,
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flowerets which drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.'[1]

Everything lives here, everything breathes and yearns. This poem, the story of a plant, is also the story of a soul—Shelley's soul, the sensitive. Is it not natural to confound them? Is there not a com-

[1] Shelley's Works, 1853, *The Sensitive Plant*, 490.

munity of nature amongst all the dwellers in this world? Verily there is a soul in everything; in the universe is a soul: be the existence what it will, unhewn or rational, defined or vague, ever beyond its sensible form shines a secret essence and something divine, which we catch sight of by sublime illuminations, never reaching or penetrating it. It is this presentiment and yearning which raises all modern poetry,—now in Christian meditations, as with Campbell and Wordsworth, now in pagan visions, as with Keats and Shelley. They hear the great heart of nature beat; they would reach it; they assay all spiritual and sensible approaches, through Judea and through Greece, by consecrated dogmas and by proscribed dogmas. In this splendid and senseless effort the greatest are exhausted and die. Their poetry, which they drag with them over these sublime tracks, is rent thereby. One alone, Byron, attains the summit; and of all these grand poetic draperies, which float like standards, and seem to summon men to the conquest of supreme truth, we see now but tatters scattered by the wayside.

Yet they did their work. Under their multiplied efforts, and by their involuntary concert, the idea of the beautiful is changed, and other ideas change by contagion. Conservatives contribute to it like revolutionaries, and the new spirit breathes through the poems which bless and those which curse Church and State. We learn from Wordsworth and Byron, by profound Protestantism[1] and confirmed scepticism, that in this sacred cant-defended establishment there is matter for reform or for revolt; that we may discover moral merits other than those which the law tickets and opinion accepts; that beyond conventional confessions there are truths; that beyond respected conditions there are greatnesses; that beyond regular positions there are virtues; that greatness is in the heart and the genius; and all the rest, actions and beliefs, are subaltern. We have just seen that beyond literary conventionalities there is a poetry, and consequently we are disposed to feel that beyond religious dogmas there may be a faith, and beyond social institutions a justice. The old edifice totters, and the Revolution enters, not by a sudden inundation, as in France, but by slow infiltration. The wall built up against it by public intolerance cracks and opens: the war waged against Jacobinism, republican and imperial, ends in victory; and henceforth we may regard opposing ideas, not as opposing enemies, but as ideas. We regard them, and, accommodating them to the different countries, we import them. Catholics are enfranchised, rotten boroughs abolished, the electoral

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[1] 'Our life is turned
Out of her course, whenever man is made
An offering, a sacrifice, a tool,
Or implement, a passive thing employed
As a brute mean.'—Wordsworth, *The Excursion.*

franchise lowered; unjust taxes, which kept up the price of corn, were repealed; ecclesiastical tithes changed into rent charges; the terrible laws protecting property were modified, the incidence of taxation brought more and more on the rich classes; old institutions, formerly established for the advantage of a race, and in this race of a class, are only maintained when for the advantage of all classes; privileges become functions; and in this triumph of the middle class, which shapes opinion and assumes the ascendency, the aristocracy, passing from sinecures to services, seems now legitimate only as a national nursery, kept up to furnish public men. At the same time narrow orthodoxy is enlarged. Zoology, astronomy, geology, botany, anthropology, all the sciences of observation, so much cultivated and so popular, forcibly introduce their dissolvent discoveries. Criticism comes in from Germany, re-handles the Bible, re-writes the history of dogma, attacks dogma itself. Meanwhile poor Scotch philosophy is dried up. Amidst the agitations of sects, endeavouring to transform each other, and the rising Unitarianism, we hear at the gates of the sacred ark the Continental philosophy roaring like a wave. Now already has it encroached upon literature: for fifty years all great writers have plunged into it,—Sidney Smith, by his sarcasms against the numbness of the clergy and the oppression of the Catholics; Arnold, by his protests against the religious monopoly of the clergy and the ecclesiastical monopoly of the Anglicans; Macaulay, by his history and panegyric of the liberal revolution; Thackeray, by attacking the nobles, in the interests of the middle class; Dickens, by attacking dignitaries and wealthy men, in the interests of the lowly and poor; Currer Bell and Mrs. Browning, by defending the initiative and independence of women; Stanley and Jowett, by introducing the German exegesis, and by fixing biblical criticism; Carlyle, by importing German metaphysics in an English form; Stuart Mill, by importing French positivism in an English form; Tennyson himself, by extending over the beauties of all lands and all ages the protection of his amiable dilettantism and his poetical sympathies,—each according to his pattern and his position, with various profundity: all restrained within reach of the shore by their practical prejudices, all strengthened against falling by their moral prejudices; all bent, some with more of eagerness, others with more of distrust, in welcoming or giving entrance to the growing tide of modern democracy and philosophy in constitution and church, without doing damage, and gradually, so as to destroy nothing, and to make everything bear fruit.

CHAPTER II.

Lord Byron.

I. The Man—Family—Impassioned character—Precocious loves—Life of excess—Combative character—Revolt against opinion—*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—Bravado and rashness—Marriage—Extravagance of adverse opinion—Departure—Political life in Italy—Sorrows and violence.

II. The poet—Reasons for writing—Manner of writing—How his poetry is personal—Classical taste—How this gift served him—*Childe Harold*—The hero—The scenery—The style.

III. His short poems—Oratorical manner—Melodramatic effects—Truth of his descriptions of scenery—Sincerity of sentiments—Pictures of sad and extreme emotions—Dominant idea of death and despair—*Mazeppa, The Prisoner of Chillon, The Siege of Corinth, The Corsair, Lara*—Analogy of this conception with the *Edda* and Shakspeare.

IV. *Manfred*—Comparison of *Manfred* and *Faust*—Conception of legend and life in Goethe—Symbolical and philosophical character of *Faust*—Wherein Byron is inferior to Goethe—Wherein he is superior—Conception of character and action in Byron—Dramatic character of his poem—Contrast between the universal and the personal poet.

V. Scandal in England—Constraint and hypocrisy of manners—How and by what law moral conceptions vary—Life and morals of the south—*Beppo*—*Don Juan*—Transformation of Byron's talent and style—Picture of sensuous beauty and happiness—Haidee—How he combats British cant—Human hypocrisy—His idea of man—Of woman—Donna Julia—The shipwreck—The capture of Ismail—Naturalness and variety of his style—Excess and wearing out of his poetic vein—His drama—Departure for Greece, and death.

VI. Position of Byron in his age—Disease of the age—Divine conceptions of happiness and life—The conception of such happiness by literature—By the sciences—Future stability of reason—Modern conception of nature.

I.

I HAVE reserved for the last the greatest and most English of these artists; he is so great and so English that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and of his age than from all the rest together. His ideas were banned during his life; it has been attempted to depreciate his genius since his death. To this day English critics are unjust to him. He fought all his life against the society from which he came; and during his life, as after his death, he suffered the pain of the resentment which he provoked, and the repugnance to

which he gave rise. A foreign critic may be more impartial, and freely praise the powerful hand whose blows he has not felt.

If ever there was a violent and madly sensitive soul, but incapable of being otherwise; ever agitated, but in an enclosure without issue; predisposed to poetry by its innate fire, but limited by its natural barriers to a single kind of poetry,—it was Byron's.

This promptitude to extreme emotions was with him a family legacy, and the result of education. His great-uncle, a sort of raving and misanthropical maniac, had slain in a tavern brawl, by candle-light, Mr. Chaworth, his relative, and had been tried before the House of Lords. His father, a brutal roysterer, had eloped with the wife of Lord Carmarthen, ruined and ill-treated Miss Gordon, his second wife; and, after living like a madman and dishonest fellow, had gone, with the last of the family property, to die abroad. His mother, in her moments of fury, would tear to pieces her dresses and her bonnets. When her wretched husband died she almost lost her reason, and her cries were heard in the street. What a childhood Byron passed in the care of 'this lioness;' in what storms of insults, interspersed with softer moods, he himself lived, just as passionate and more bitter, it would take a long story to tell. She ran after him, called him a 'lame brat,' shouted at him, and threw fire-shovel and tongs at his head. He held his tongue, bowed, and none the less felt the outrage. One day, when he was 'in one of his silent rages,' they had to take out of his hand a knife which he had taken from the table, and which he was already raising to his throat. Another time the quarrel was so terrible, that son and mother, each privately, went to 'the apothecary's, inquiring anxiously whether the other had been to purchase poison, and cautioning the vendor of drugs not to attend to such an application, if made.'[1] When he went to school, 'his friendships were passions.' Many years afterwards, he never heard the name of Lord Clare, one of his old schoolfellows, pronounced, without 'a beating of the heart.'[2] A score of times he got himself into trouble for his friends, offering them his time, his pen, his purse. One day, at Harrow, a big boy claimed the right to fag his friend, little Peel, and finding him refractory, gave him a beating on the inner fleshy side of his arm, which he had twisted round to make it more sensitive. Byron, too small to fight the rascal, came up to him, 'blushing with rage,' tears in his eyes, and asked with a trembling voice how many stripes he meant to inflict. 'Why,' returned the executioner, 'you little rascal, what is that to you?' 'Because, if you please,' said Byron, holding out his arm, 'I would take half.'[3] He never met an object of distress without affording him succour.[4] Later, in Italy, he gave away a thousand pounds out of every four thousand he spent. The sources of life in this heart were too full,

[1] Byron's Works, ed. Moore, 17 vols. 1832; *Life*, i. 102.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 63.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 69.
[4] *Ibid.* 137.

and flooded forth good and evil impetuously, at the least shock. Like Dante, at the age of eight he fell in love with a child named Mary Duff.

'How very odd that I should have been so utterly, devotedly fond of that girl, at an age when I could neither feel passion, nor know the meaning of the word! . . . I recollect all our caresses, . . . my restlessness, my sleeplessness. My misery, my love for that girl were so violent, that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. When I heard of her being married, . . . it nearly threw me into convulsions.'[1]

'My passion had its usual effects upon me. I could not sleep—I could not eat—I could not rest; and although I had reason to know that she loved me, it was the texture of my life to think of the time which must elapse before we could meet again, being usually about twelve hours of separation. But I was a fool then, and am not much wiser now.'[2]

At twelve years he fell in love with his cousin, Margaret Parker.

He never was wiser. Hard reading at school; vehement exercise, later on, at Cambridge, Newstead, and London; prolonged watches, debauches, long fasts, a destructive way of living,—he rushed to the extreme of every taste and every excess. As he was a dandy, and one of the most brilliant, he nearly let himself die of hunger for fear of becoming fat, then drank and ate greedily during his nights of recklessness. Moore said:

'Lord Byron, for the last two days, had done nothing towards sustenance beyond eating a few biscuits and (to appease appetite) chewing mastic. . . . He confined himself to lobsters, and of these finished two or three to his own share,—interposing, sometimes, a small liqueur-glass of strong white brandy, sometimes a tumbler of very hot water, and then pure brandy again, to the amount of near half a dozen small glasses of the latter. . . . After this we had claret, of which having despatched two bottles between us, at about four o'clock in the morning we parted.'[3]

Another day we find in Byron's journal the following words:

'Yesterday, dined *tête-à-tête* at the "Cocoa" with Scrope Davies—sat from six till midnight—drank between us one bottle of champagne and six of claret, neither of which wines ever affect me.'[4]

Later, at Venice:

'I have hardly had a wink of sleep this week past. I have had some curious masking adventures this carnival. . . . I will work the mine of my youth to the last vein of the ore, and then—good night. I have lived, and am content.'[5]

At this rate the organs wear out, and intervals of temperance are not sufficient to repair them. The stomach does not continue to act, the nerves get out of order, and the soul undermines the body, and the body the soul.

'I always wake in actual despair and despondency, in all respects, even of that which pleased me over-night. In England, five years ago, I had the same

[1] Byron's Works, *Life*, i. 26. [2] *Ibid.* i. 53. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 83.
[4] *Ibid.* ii. 20, March 28, 1814. [5] *Ibid.* iv. 81; Letter to Moore, Feb. 12, 1818.

kind of hypochondria, but accompanied with so violent a thirst that I have drank as many as fifteen bottles of soda-water in one night after going to bed, and been still thirsty, . . . striking off the necks of bottles from mere thirsty impatience.'[1]

Much less is necessary to ruin mind and body wholly. Thus these vehement minds live, ever driven and broken by their own energy, like a cannon ball, which, when arrested, turns and seems motionless, so quickly it goes flying, but at the smallest obstacle leaps up, rebounds, raises a cloud of dust, and ends by burying itself in the earth. Beyle, a most shrewd observer, who lived with Byron for several weeks, says that on certain days he was mad; at other times, in presence of beautiful things, he became sublime. Though reserved and so proud, music made him weep. The rest of his time, petty English passions, pride of rank, for instance, a vain dandyism, unhinged him: he spoke of Brummel with a shudder of jealousy and admiration. But, small or great, the present passion swept down upon his mind like a tempest, roused him, transported him either into imprudence or genius. His journal, his familiar letters, all his unstudied prose, is, as it were, trembling with wit, anger, enthusiasm: since Saint Simon we have not seen more lifelike confidences. All styles appear dull, and all souls sluggish by the side of his.

In this splendid rush of unbridled and disbanded faculties, which leaped up at random, and seemed to drive him without option to the four quarters of the globe, one took the reins, and cast him on the wall against which he was broken.

'Sir Walter Scott describes Lord Byron as being a man of real goodness of heart, and the kindest and best feelings, miserably thrown away by his foolish contempt of public opinion. Instead of being warned or checked by public opposition, it roused him to go on in a worse strain, as if he said, "Ay, you don't like it; well, you shall have something worse for your pains."'[2]

This rebellious instinct is inherent in the race; there was a whole cluster of wild passions, born of the climate,[3] which nourished him: a gloomy humour, violent imagination, indomitable pride, a relish of danger, a craving for strife, the inner exaltation, only satiated by destruction, and that sombre madness which urged forward the Scandinavian Bierserkers, when, in an open bark, under a sky cloven with the lightning, they launched out upon the tempest, whose fury they had breathed. This instinct is in the blood: people are born so, as they

[1] Byron's Works, *Life*, v. 96, Feb. 2, 1821.

[2] Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, vii. 323.

[3] 'If I was born, as the nurses say, with a "silver spoon in my mouth," it has stuck in my throat, and spoiled my palate, so that nothing put into it is swallowed with much relish,—unless it be cayenne. . . . I see no such horror in a dreamless sleep, and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not make tiresome.'

are born lions or bulldogs.[1] Byron was still a little boy in petticoats when his nurse scolded him rudely for having soiled or torn a new frock which he had just put on. He got into one of his silent rages, seized the garment with his hands, rent it from top to bottom, and stood erect, motionless, and gloomy before the storming nurse, so as to set more effectually her wrath at defiance. His pride overflowed. When at ten he inherited the title of lord, and his name was first called at school, preceded by the title *dominus*, he could not answer the customary *adsum*, stood silent amidst the general stare of his school-fellows, and at last burst into tears. Another time, at Harrow, in a dispute which was dividing the school, a boy said, 'Byron won't join us, for he never likes to be second anywhere.' He was offered the command, and then only would he condescend to take part with them. Never to submit to a master; to rise with his whole soul against every semblance of encroachment or rule; to keep his person intact and inviolate at all cost, and to the end against all; to dare everything rather than give sign of submission,—such was his character. This is why he was disposed to undergo anything rather than give signs of weakness. At ten he was a stoic from pride. His foot was painfully stretched in a wooden contrivance whilst he was taking his Latin lesson, and his master pitied him, saying 'he must be suffering.' 'Never mind, Mr. Rogers,' he said, 'you shall not see any signs of it in me.'[2] Such as he was as a child, he continued as a man. In mind and body he strove, or prepared himself for strife.[3] Every day, for hours at a time, he boxed, fired pistols, practised the sabre, ran and leaped, rode, overcame obstacles. These were the exploits of his hands and muscles; but he needed others. For lack of enemies he found fault with society, and made war upon it. We know to what excesses the dominant opinions then ran. England was at the height of the war with France, and thought it was fighting for morality and liberty. In their eyes, at this time, church and constitution were holy things: beware how you touch them, if you would not become a public enemy! In this fit of national passion and Protestant severity, whosoever publicly avowed liberal ideas and manners seemed an incendiary, and stirred up against himself the instincts of property, the doctrines of moralists, the interests of politicians, and the prejudices of the people. Byron chose this moment to praise Voltaire and Rousseau, to admire Napoleon, to avow himself a sceptic, to plead for nature and pleasure against cant and rule, to say that high English society, debauched and hypocritical, made phrases and killed men, to preserve their sinecures and rotten

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[1] 'I like Junius: he was a good hater.—I don't understand yielding sensitiveness. What I feel is an immense rage for forty-eight hours.'

[2] Byron's Works, *Life*, i. 41.

[3] 'I like energy—even mental energy—of all kinds, and have need of both mental and corporeal.'—*Ibid.* ii.

boroughs. As though political hatred was not enough, he contracted, in addition, literary animosities, attacked the whole body of critics,[1] ran down the new poetry, declared that the most celebrated were 'Claudians,' men of the later empire, raged against the Lake school, and in consequence had in Southey a bitter and unwearied enemy. Thus provided with enemies, he laid himself open to attack on all sides. He decried himself through his hatred of cant, his bravado, his boasting about his vices. He depicted himself in his heroes, but for the worse; in such a way that no one could fail to recognise him, and think him much worse than he was. Walter Scott wrote, immediately after seeing *Childe Harold:*

'*Childe-Harold* is, I think, a very clever poem, but gives no good symptom of the writer's heart or morals. . . . Vice ought to be a little more modest, and it must require impudence almost equal to the noble Lord's other powers, to claim sympathy gravely for the ennui arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours. There is a monstrous deal of conceit in it, too, for it is informing the inferior part of the world that their little old-fashioned scruples of limitation are not worthy of his regard.'[2] . . .

'My noble friend is something like my old peacock, who chooses to bivouac apart from his lady, and sit below my bedroom window, to keep me awake with his screeching lamentation. Only, I own he is not equal in melody to Lord Byron.'[3]

Such were the sentiments which he called forth in all respectable classes. He was pleased thereat, and did worse—giving out that in his adventures in the East he had dared a good many things; and he was not indignant when confounded with his heroes. Once he said he should like to feel for once the sensations of a man who had committed a murder. Another time he wrote in his Diary:

'Hobhouse told me an odd report,—that I am the actual Conrad, the veritable Corsair, and that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in privacy. Um! people sometimes hit near the truth, but never the whole truth. He don't know what I was about the year after he left the Levant; nor does any one—nor—nor—nor—however, it is a lie—"but I doubt the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth."'[4]

Dangerous words, which were turned against him like a dagger; but he loved danger, mortal danger, and was only at ease when he saw the points of all angers bristling against him. Alone against all, against an armed society; erect, invincible, even against common sense, even against conscience,—it was then he felt in all his strained nerves the great and terrible sensation, to which his whole being involuntarily inclined.

A last imprudence brought down the attack. As long as he was an unmarried man, his excesses might be excused by the over-strong fire of a temperament which often causes youth in this land to revolt

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[1] In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*

[2] Lockhart's *Life of Sir Walter Scott,* iii. 389.

[3] *Ibid.* v. 141.

[4] Moore's *Life of Byron,* iii. 12, March 10, Thor's Day. The last part of the sentence is a quotation from *Macbeth,* v. 5.

against good taste and rule; but marriage settles them, and it was marriage which in him completed his unsettling. He found that his wife was a kind of model-virtue, mentioned as such, 'a creature of rule,' correct and dry, incapable of committing a fault herself, and of forgiving. His servant Fletcher observed, that he never knew a lady who could not govern his master, except his wife. Lady Byron thought her husband mad, and had him examined by physicians. Having learned that he was in his right mind, she left him, returned to her father, and refused ever to see him again. Thereupon he passed for a monster. The papers covered him with opprobrium; his friends induced him not to go to a theatre or to Parliament, fearing that he would be hooted or insulted. The fury and torture which so violent a soul, precociously accustomed to brilliant glory, felt in this universal storm of outrage, can only be learned from his verses. He grew stubborn, went to Venice, and steeped himself in the voluptuous Italian life, even in low debauchery, the better to insult the Puritan prudery which had condemned him, and left it only through an offence still more blamed, his public intimacy with the young Countess Guiccioli. Meanwhile he showed himself as bitterly republican in politics as in morality. He wrote in 1813: 'I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments.' This time, at Ravenna, his house was the centre and storehouse of conspirators, and he generously and imprudently prepared to take arms with them, to strike for the deliverance of Italy:

'They mean to insurrect here, and are to honour me with a call thereupon. I shall not fall back; though I don't think them in force and heart sufficient to make much of it. But, *onward*. . . . What signifies *self*? . . . It is not one man nor a million, but the *spirit* of liberty which must be spread. . . . The mere selfish calculation ought never to be made on such occasions; and, at present, it shall not be computed by me. . . . I should almost regret that my own affairs went well, when those of nations are in peril.'[1]

In the meantime he had quarrels with the police: his house was watched, he was threatened with assassination, and yet he rode out daily, and went into the neighbouring pine-forest to practise pistol-shooting. These are the sentiments of a man at the muzzle of a loaded cannon, waiting for it to go off. The emotion is great, nay, heroic, but it is not sweet; and certainly, even at this season of great emotion, he was unhappy. Nothing is more likely to poison happiness than a combative spirit. He writes:

'What is the reason that I have been, all my lifetime, more or less *ennuyé*? . . . I do not know how to answer this, but presume that it is constitutional, as well as the waking in low spirits, which I have invariably done for many years. Temperance and exercise, which I have practised at times, and for a long time together vigorously and violently, made little or no difference. Violent passions

[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 67, Jan. 9, 1821.

did: when under their immediate influence—it is odd, but—I was in agitated, but *not* in depressed spirits. . . . Wine and spirits make me sullen and savage to ferocity—silent, however, and retiring, and not quarrelsome, if not spoken to. Swimming also raises my spirits ; but in general they are low, and get daily lower. That is *hopeless ;* for I do not think I am so much *ennuyé* as I was at nineteen. The proof is, that then I must game, or drink, or be in motion of some kind, or I was miserable.'[1]

'What I feel most growing upon me are laziness, and a disrelish more powerful than indifference. If I rouse, it is into fury. I presume that I shall end (if not earlier by accident, or some such termination) like Swift, "dying at top."[2] Lega (his servant) came in with a letter about a bill unpaid at Venice which I thought paid months ago. I flew into a paroxysm of rage, which almost made me faint. I have always had *une âme*, which not only tormented itself, but everybody else in contact with it, and an *esprit violent*, which has almost left me without any *esprit* at all.'[3]

A horrible foreboding, which haunted him to the end! On his death-bed, in Greece, he refused, I know not why, to be bled, and preferred to die at once. They threatened that the uncontrolled disease might end in madness. He sprang up: 'There! you are, I see, a d—d set of butchers! Take away as much blood as you like, but have done with it,'[4] and stretched out his arm. Amidst such splendours and anxieties he passed his life. Anguish endured, danger braved, resistance overcome, grief relished, all the greatness and sadness of the black warlike madness,—such are the images which he needs must let pass before him. In default of action he had dreams, and he only betook himself to dreams for want of action. He said, when embarking for Greece, that he had taken poetry for lack of better, and that it was not his fit work. 'What is a poet? what is he worth? what does he do? He is a babbler.' He augured ill of the poetry of his age, even of his own; saying that, if he lived ten years more, they should see something else from him but verses. In fact, he would have been more at home as a sea-king, or a captain of a band of troopers during the Middle-ages. Except two or three gleams of Italian sunshine, his poetry and life are those of a Scald transplanted into modern life, who in this over-well regulated world did not find his vocation.

II.

Byron was a poet, then, but in his own fashion—a strange fashion, like that in which he lived. There were internal tempests within him, avalanches of ideas, which found issue only in writing. He wrote:

'I have written from the fulness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not "for their sweet voices." To withdraw myself from myself has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in scribbling at all—and publishing also the continuance of the same object, by the action it affords to the mind, which else recoils upon itself.'

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[1] Moore, Byron's Works ; *Life*, v. 60, Jan. 6, 1821.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 97, Feb. 2, 1821. [3] *Ibid.* 95. [4] *Ibid.* vi. 206.

He wrote almost always with astonishing rapidity, *The Corsair* in ten days, *The Bride of Abydos* in four days. While it was printing he added and corrected, but without recasting:

'I told you before that I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger. If I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle again; but if I do it, it is crushing.'[2]

Doubtless he sprang, but he had a chain: never, in the freest flight of his thoughts, did he liberate himself from himself. He dreams of himself, and sees himself throughout. It is a boiling torrent, but hedged in with rocks. No such great poet has had so narrow an imagination; he could not metamorphose himself into another. They are his own sorrows, his own revolts, his own travels, which, hardly transformed and modified, he introduces into his verses. He does not invent, he observes; he does not create, he transcribes. His copy is darkly exaggerated, but it is a copy. 'I could not write upon anything,' says he, 'without some personal experience and foundation.' You will find in his letters and notebook, almost feature for feature, the most striking of his descriptions. The capture of Ismail, the shipwreck of Don Juan, are, almost word for word, like two accounts of it in prose. If none but cockneys could attribute to him the crimes of his heroes, none but blind men could fail to see in him the sentiments of his characters. This is so true, that he has not created more than one. Childe Harold, Lara, the Giaour, the Corsair, Manfred, Sardanapalus, Cain, Tasso, Dante, and the rest, are always the same—one man represented under various costumes, in several lands, with different expressions; but just as painters do, when, by change of garments, decorations, and attitudes, they draw fifty portraits from the same model. He meditated too much upon himself to be enamoured of anything else. The habitual sternness of his will prevented his mind from being flexible; his force, always concentrated for effort and strained for strife, shut him up in self-contemplation, and reduced him never to make a poem, save of his own heart.

In what style would he write! With these concentrated and tragic sentiments he had a classical mind. By the strangest mixture, the books, which he preferred, were at once the most violent or the most regular, the Bible above all:

'I am a great reader and admirer of those books (the Bible), and had read them through and through before I was eight years old; that is to say, the Old Testament, for the New struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure.'[2]

Observe this word: he did not relish the tender and self-denying mysticism of the gospel, but the cruel sternness and lyrical outcries of the old Hebrews. Next to the Bible he loved Pope, the most correct and formal of men:

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[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 33, Ravenna, Nov. 18, 1820.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 265.

'As to Pope, I have always regarded him as the greatest name in our poetry. Depend upon it, the rest are barbarians. He is a Greek Temple, with a Gothic Cathedral on one hand, and a Turkish Mosque and all sorts of fantastic pagodas and conventicles about him. You may call Shakspeare and Milton pyramids, but I prefer the Temple of Theseus or the Parthenon to a mountain of burnt brickwork. . . . The grand distinction of the underforms of the new school of poets is their vulgarity. By this I do not mean they are coarse, but shabby-genteel.'[1]

And he presently wrote two letters with incomparable vivacity and spirit, to defend Pope against the scorn of modern writers. These writers, according to him, have spoiled the public taste. The only ones who were worth anything—Crabbe, Campbell, Rogers—imitate the style of Pope. A few others had talent; but, take them all together, the newest ones had perverted literature: they did not know their language; their expressions are only approximate, above or below the true tone, forced or dull. He ranges himself amongst the corrupters,[2] and we soon see that this theory is not an invention, springing from bad temper and polemics; he returns to it. In his two first attempts—*Hours of Idleness*, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*—he tried to follow it up. Later, and in almost all his works, we find its effect. He recommends and practises the rule of unity in tragedy. He loves oratorical form, symmetrical phrase, condensed style. He likes to plead his passions. Sheridan tried to induce Byron to devote himself to eloquence; and the vigour, piercing logic, wonderful vivacity, close argument of his prose, prove that he would have had the first rank amongst pamphleteers.[3] If he attains to it amongst the poets, it is partly due to his classical system. This oratorical form, in which Pope compresses his thought like La Bruyère, magnifies the force and swing of vehement ideas; like a narrow and straight canal, it collects and dashes them down its slope: there is then nothing which their impetus does not carry away; and it is thus Lord Byron from the first, through restless criticisms, over jealous reputations, has made his way to the public.[4]

Thus *Childe Harold* made its way. At the first onset every one was agitated. It was more than an author who spoke; it was a man. In spite of his disavowals, it was well seen that the author was but one with his hero: he calumniated himself, but he imitated himself. He was recognised in that young voluptuous and disgusted man, ready to weep amidst his orgies, who

> 'Sore sick at heart,
> And from his fellow bacchanals would flee;
> 'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,
> But Pride congeal'd the drop within his ee:

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[1] Moore, Byron's Works; *Life*, v. 150, Ravenna, May 3, 1821.

[2] 'All the styles of the day are bombastic. I don't except my own; no one has done more through negligence to corrupt the language.'

[3] See his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

[4] Thirty thousand copies of the *Corsair* were sold in one day.

Apart he stalk'd in joyless reverie,
And from his native land resolved to go,
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea;
With pleasure drugg'd, he almost long'd for woe.'[1]

Fleeing from his native land, he carried, amongst the splendours and cheerfulness of the south, his unwearying persecutor, 'demon thought,' implacable behind him. The scenery was recognised: it had been copied on the spot. And what was the whole book but a diary of travel? He said in it what he had seen and thought. What poetic fiction is as valuable as genuine sensation? What is more penetrating than confidence, voluntary or involuntary? Truly, every word here noted an emotion of eye or heart:

'The tender azure of the unruffled deep. . . .
The mountain-moss by scorching skies imbrown'd. . . .
The orange tints that gild the greenest bough.' . . .[2]

All these beauties, calm or imposing, he had enjoyed, and sometimes suffered through them; and hence we see them through his verse. Whatever he touched, he made palpitate and live; because, when he saw it, his heart had beaten and he had lived. He himself, a little later, quitting the mask of Harold, took up the parable in his own name; and who would not be touched by avowals so passionate and complete?

'Yet must I think less wildly:—I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what time can not abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate. . . .

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;
Proud though in desolation, which could find,
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind. . . .

Like the Chaldean, he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams; and earth, and earth-born jars,
And human frailties, were forgotten quite:

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[1] Byron's Works, viii.; *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. i. 6.
[2] *Ibid.* c. i. 19

Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy ; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home :
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat
Of his impeded soul would through his bosom eat.'[1]

Such are the sentiments wherewith he surveyed nature and history, not to comprehend them and forget himself before them, but to seek in them and impress upon them the image of his own passions. He does not let objects speak, but forces them to answer him. Amidst their peace, he is only occupied by his own emotion. He raises them to the tone of his soul, and compels them to repeat his own cries. All is inflated here, as in himself ; the vast strophe rolls along, carrying in its overflowing bed the flood of vehement ideas ; declamation unfolds itself, pompous, and at times artificial (it was his first work), but potent, and so often sublime that the rhetorical dotings, which he yet preserved, disappeared under the afflux of splendours, with which it is loaded. Wordsworth, Walter Scott, by the side of this prodigality of accumulated splendours, seemed poor and gloomy ; never since Æschylus was seen so tragic a pomp ; and men followed, with a sort of pang, the train of gigantic figures, whom he brought in mournful ranks before our eyes, from the far past :

'I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs ;
A palace and a prison on each hand :
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand :
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Look'd to the winged Lion's marble piles,
When Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!

She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
Rising with her tiara of proud towers
At airy distance, with majestic motion,
A ruler of the waters and their powers :

[1] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iii. 7-15.

And such she was;—her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
Pour'd in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
In purple was she robed, and of her feast
Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased. . . .[1]

Lo! where the Giant on the mountain stands,
His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon;
Restless it rolls, now fix'd, and now anon
Flashing afar,—and at his iron feet
Destruction cowers, to mark what deeds are done;
For on this morn three potent nations meet,
To shed before his shrine the blood he deems most sweet.

By Heaven! it is a splendid sight to see
(For one who hath no friend, no brother there)
Their rival scarfs of mix'd embroidery,
Their various arms that glitter in the air!
What gallant war-hounds rouse them from their lair,
And gnash their fangs, loud yelling for the prey!
All join the chase, but few the triumphs share;
The Grave shall bear the chiefest prize away,
And Havoc scarce for joy can number their array. . .[2]

What from this barren being do we reap?
Our senses narrow, and our reason frail,
Life short, and truth a gem which loves the deep,
And all things weigh'd in custom's falsest scale;
Opinion an omnipotence,—whose veil
Mantles the earth with darkness, until right
And wrong are accidents, and men grow pale
Lest their own judgments should become too bright,
And their free thoughts be crimes, and earth have too much light.

And thus they plod in sluggish misery,
Rotting from sire to son, and age to age,
Proud of their trampled nature, and so die,
Bequeathing their hereditary rage
To the new race of inborn slaves, who wage
War for their chains, and rather than be free,
Bleed gladiator-like, and still engage
Within the same arena where they see
Their fellows fall before, like leaves of the same tree.'[3]

Has ever style better expressed a soul? It is seen here labouring and expanding. Long and stormily the ideas boiled like metal heaped in the furnace. They melted there before the strain of the intense heat; they mingled therein their lava amidst shocks and explosions,

[1] *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, c. iv. 1 and 2.
[2] *Ibid.* c. i. 39 and 40.
[3] *Ibid.* c. iv. 93 and 94.

and then at last the door is opened: a dull stream of fire descends into the trough prepared beforehand, heating the circumambient air, and its glittering hues scorch the eyes which persist in looking upon it.

III.

Description and monologue did not suffice Byron; and he needed, to express his ideal, events and actions. Only events put to proof the force and spring of the soul; only actions manifest and measure this force and spring. Amidst events he sought for the most powerful, amidst actions the strongest; and we see appear successively *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Mazeppa*, and *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

I know that these sparkling poems have grown dull in forty years. In their necklace of oriental pearls have been discovered beads of glass; and Byron, who only half loved them, judged better than his judges. Yet he had judged amiss; those which he preferred are the most false. His *Corsair* is marred by classic elegancies: the pirates' song at the beginning is no truer than a chorus at the Italian opera; his scamps propound philosophical antitheses as balanced as those of Pope. A hundred times ambition, glory, envy, despair, and the other abstract personages, whose images in the time of the Empire the French used to set upon their drawing-room clocks, break in amidst living passions.[1] The noblest passages are disfigured by pedantic apostrophes, and the pretentious poetic diction sets up its threadbare frippery and conventional ornaments.[2] Far worse, he studies effect and follows the fashion. Melodramatic strings pull his characters, so as to obtain the grimace which shall make his public shudder:

> 'Who thundering comes on blackest steed,
> With slacken'd bit and hoof of speed?
> . . . Approach, thou craven crouching slave,
> Say, is not this Thermopylæ?'

Wretched fashions, emphatic and vulgar, imitated from Lucan and our modern Lucans, but which produce their effect during a first perusal, and on the herd of readers. There is an infallible means of attracting a mob, which is, to shout out loud; with shipwrecks, sieges, murders, and combats, we shall always interest them; show them

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[1] For example, 'as weeping Beauty's cheek at Sorrow's tale.'

[2] Here are verses like Pope, very beautiful and false:

> 'And havock loath so much the waste of time,
> She scarce had left an uncommitted crime.
> One hour beheld him since the tide he stemm'd,
> Disguised, discover'd, conquering, ta'en, condemn'd,
> A chief on land, an outlaw on the deep,
> Destroying, saving, prison'd, and asleep!'

pirates, desperate adventurers,—these distorted or furious faces will draw them out of their regular and monotonous existence; they will go to see them as they go to the melodramas, and through the same instinct which induces them to read novels in penny numbers. Add, by way of contrast, angelic women, tender and submissive, all beautiful as angels. Byron describes this, and adds to all these seductions a panoramic scenery, oriental or picturesque adornments; old Alpine castles, the Mediterranean waves, the setting suns of Greece, the whole in high relief, with marked shadows and brilliant colours. We are all of the people, as regards emotions; and the great lady, like the waiting-woman, sheds tears at once, without cavilling with the author as to the means he uses.

And yet truth flows through it all. No; this man is not an arranger of effects or an inventor of phrases. He has lived amidst the spectacles he describes; he has experienced the emotions he relates. He has been in the tent of Ali Pacha, and relished the strong savour of ocean adventure and savage manners. He has been a score of times near death,—in the Morea, in the anguish and the solitude of fever; at Suli, in a shipwreck; at Malta, in England, and in Italy, in the dangers of a duel, plots of insurrection, commencements of sudden attacks, at sea, in arms, on horseback, having seen assassination, wounds, agonies close to him, and that more than once.

'I am living here exposed to it (assassination) daily, for I have happened to make a powerful and unprincipled man my enemy; and I never sleep the worse for it, or ride in less solitary places, because precaution is useless, and one thinks of it as of a disease which may or may not strike.'[1]

He spoke the truth; no one ever held himself more erect and firm in danger. One day, near the Gulf of San Fiorenzo, his yacht was thrown on the coast; the sea was terrific, and the rocks in sight; the passengers kissed their rosaries, or fainted with horror; and the two captains being consulted, declared shipwreck inevitable. 'Well,' said Lord Byron, 'we are all born to die; I shall go with regret, but certainly not with fear.' And he took off his clothes, begging the others to do the same, not that they could save themselves amidst such waves.

'It is every man's duty to endeavour to preserve the life God has given him; so I advise you all to strip: swimming, indeed, can be of little use in these billows; but as children, when tired with crying, sink placidly to repose, we, when exhausted with struggling, shall die the easier. . . .'

He then sat down, folding his arms, very calm; he even joked with the captain, who was putting his dollars into his waistcoat pocket. . . . The ship approached the rocks. All this time Byron was not seen to change countenance. A man thus tried and moulded could paint extreme situations and sentiments. After all, they are never painted

[1] Moore's *Life*, iv. 345.

otherwise than thus, by experience. The most inventive—Dante and Shakspeare—though quite different, yet do the same thing. However high their genius rose, it always had its feet in observation; and their most foolish, like their most splendid pictures, never offer to the world more than an image of their age, or of their own heart. At most, they *deduce;* that is, having derived from two or three features the inward qualities of the man and of the men around them, they draw thence, by a sudden ratiocination of which they have no consciousness, the varied skein of actions and sentiments. They may be artists, but they are observers. They may invent, but they describe. Their glory does not consist in the display of a phantasmagoria, but in the discovery of a truth. They are the first to enter some unexplored province of humanity, which becomes their domain, and thenceforth supports their name like an appanage. Byron found his domain, which is that of sad and tender sentiments: it is a wild heath, and full of ruins; but he is at home there, and he is alone.

What an abode! And it is on this desolation that he dwells. He muses on it. See the brothers of Childe Harold pass—the characters who people it. One in his prison, chained up with the two brothers remaining to him. Three others, with their father, perished fighting, or were burnt for their faith. One by one, before the eyes of the eldest, the last two languish and fade: a silent and slow agony in the damp darkness, into which a beam of the sickly sun pierces through a crevice. After the death of the first, the survivors demand that he shall at least be buried on a spot 'whereon the day might shine.' The jailers

> 'Coldly laugh, and laid him there:
> The flat and turfless earth above
> The being we so much did love;
> His empty chain above it leant.
> . . . He faded. . . .
> With all the while a cheek whose bloom
> Was as mockery of the tomb,
> Whose tints as gently sunk away
> As a departing rainbow's ray.'[1]

The pillars are too far apart,—the brother cannot approach the dying man; he listens and hears the failing sighs; he cries for succour, and none comes. He breaks his chain with a vast effort: all is over. He takes that cold hand, and then, before the motionless body, his senses are stopped up, his thoughts arrested, he is like a drowning man, who, after passing through anguish, lets himself sink down like a stone, and no longer feels existence but by a complete petrifaction of horror. Here is another brother of Childe Harold, Mazeppa, bound naked, and on a wild horse rushing over the steppes. He writhes, and his

[1] Byron's Works, x., *The Prisoner of Chillon*, c. vii. and viii.

swollen limbs, cut by the cords, are bleeding. A whole day the course continues, and behind him the wolves are howling. The night through he hears their long monotonous chase, and at the end his energy fails.

'. . . The earth gave way, the skies roll'd round,
I seem'd to sink upon the ground;
But err'd, for I was fastly bound.
My heart turn'd sick, my brain grew sore,
And throbb'd awhile, then beat no more;
The skies spun like a mighty wheel;
I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
Which saw no further: he who dies
Can die no more than then I died. . . .
I felt the blackness come and go,
And strove to wake; but could not make
My senses climb up from below:
I felt as on a plank at sea,
When all the waves that dash o'er thee,
At the same time upheave and whelm,
And hurl thee towards a desert realm.'[1]

Should I enumerate them all? Hugo, Parisina, the Foscari, the Giaour, the Corsair. His hero is always a man striving with the worst anguish, face to face with shipwreck, torture, death,—his own painful and prolonged death, the bitter death of his well-beloved, remorse for his companion, amidst the gloomy prospects of a threatening eternity, with no support but native energy and hardened pride. They have desired too much, too impetuously, with a senseless swing, like a horse which does not feel the bit, and thenceforth their inner doom drives them to the abyss which they see, and cannot escape. What a night was that of Alp before Corinth! He is a renegade, and comes with the Mussulmans to besiege the Christians, his old friends—Minotti, the father of the girl he loves. Next day he is to lead the assault, and he thinks of his death, which he forebodes, the carnage of his own people, which he is preparing. There is no inner support but rooted resentment and the fixity of stern will. The Mussulmans despise him, the Christians execrate him, and his glory only publishes his treason. Oppressed and fevered, he passes through the sleeping camp, and wanders on the shore:

'Tis midnight: on the mountains brown
The cold, round moon shines deeply down;
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light. . . .
The waves on either shore lay there
Calm, clear, and azure as the air;

[1] Byron's Works, xi., *Mazeppa*, c. xiii. 167.

And scarce their foam the pebbles shook.
But murmur'd meekly as the brook.
The winds were pillow'd on the waves;
The banners droop'd along their staves. . . .
And that deep silence was unbroke,
Save where the watch his signal spoke,
Save where the steed neigh'd oft and shrill, . . .
And the wide hum of that wild host
Rustled like leaves from coast to coast.' . . .[1]

How the heart sickens before such spectacles! What a contrast between his agony and the peace of immortal nature! How man stretches then his arms towards ideal beauty, and how impotently they fall back at the contact of our clay and immortality! Alp advances over the sandy shore to the foot of the bastion, under the fire of the sentinels; and he hardly thinks of it:

'And he saw the lean dogs beneath the wall
Hold o'er the dead their carnival,
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb;
They were too busy to bark at him!
From a Tartar's skull they had stripped the flesh,
As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh;
And their white tusks crunch'd o'er the whiter skull,
As it slipp'd through their jaws, when their edge grew dull.
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,
When they scarce could rise from the spot where they fed;
So well had they broken a lingering fast
With those who had fallen for that night's repast.
And Alp knew, by the turbans that roll'd on the sand,
The foremost of these were the best of his band:
Crimson and green were the shawls of their wear,
And each scalp had a single long tuft of hair,
All the rest was shaven and bare.
The scalps were in the wild dog's maw,
The hair was tangled round his jaw.
But close by the shore, on the edge of the gulf,
There sat a vulture flapping a wolf,
Who had stolen from the hills, but kept away,
Scared by the dogs, from the human prey;
But he seized on his share of a steed that lay,
Pick'd by the birds, on the sands of the bay.'[2]

Such is the goal of man; the hot frenzy of life ends here; buried or not, it matters little: vultures or jackals, his gravediggers know their work. The storm of his rages and his efforts have only served to cast him to these for their food, and to their beaks and jaws he comes only with the sentiment of frustrated hopes and insatiate desires. Could any of us forget the death of Lara after once reading it? Has any

[1] Byron's Works, x., *The Siege of Corinth*, c. xi. 116. [2] *Ibid.* c. xvi. 123.

one elsewhere seen, save in Shakspeare, a sadder picture of the destiny of a man vainly rearing against inevitable fate? Though generous, like Macbeth, he has, like Macbeth, dared everything against law and conscience, even against pity and the commonest honour. Crimes committed have forced him into other crimes, and blood poured out has made him glide into a pool of blood. As a corsair, he has slain; as a cut-throat, he assassinates; and the old murders which haunt his dreams come with their bat's-wings beating against the doors of his brain. He does not drive them away, these black visitors; though the mouth remains silent, the pallid brow and strange smile bear witness to their approach. And yet it is a noble spectacle to see man standing with calm countenance even under their touch. The last day comes, and six inches of iron suffice for all this energy and fury. Lara is lying beneath a lime tree, and his wound 'is bleeding fast from life away.' With each convulsion the stream gushes blacker, then stops; the blood flows drop by drop, and his brow is already moist, his eye dim. The victors arrive—he does not deign to answer them; the priest brings near the absolving cross, 'but he look'd upon it with an eye profane.' What remains to him of life is for his poor page, the only being who has loved him, who has followed him to the end, who now tries to stanch the blood from his wound:

> 'He scarce can speak, but motions him 't is vain,
> He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,
> And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page. . . .
> His dying tones are in that other tongue,
> To which some strange remembrance wildly clung. . . .
> And once, as Kaled's answering accents ceased,
> Rose Lara's hand, and pointed to the East:
> Whether (as then the breaking sun from high
> Roll'd back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,
> Or that 'twas chance, or some remember'd scene,
> That raised his arm to point where such had been,
> Scarce Kaled seem'd to know, but turn'd away,
> As if his heart abhorr'd that coming day,
> And shrunk his glance before that morning light,
> To look on Lara's brow—where all grew night. . . .
> But from his visage little could we guess,
> So unrepentant, dark, and passionless. . . .
> But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew,
> And dull the film along his dim eye grew;
> His limbs stretch'd fluttering, and his head droop'd o'er.'[1]

All is over, and of this haughty spirit there remains but a poor piece of clay. After all, it is the desirable lot of such hearts; they have spent life amiss, and rest well only in the tomb.

A strange and altogether northern poetry, with its root in the Edda

[1] Byron's Works, x.; *Lara*, c. 2, st. 17–20, 60.

and its flower in Shakspeare, born long ago under an inclement sky, on the shores of a stormy ocean,—the work of a too wilful, too strong, too sombre race,—and which, after lavishing its images of desolation and heroism, ends by stretching like a black veil over the whole of living nature the dream of universal destruction: this dream is here, as in the Edda, almost equally grand:

'I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day. . . .
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black. . . .
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face. . . .
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food:
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again;—a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death,
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead

Lured their lank jaws ; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees ; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies : they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage ; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery ; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died.'[1] . . .

IV.

Amongst these immoderate and funereal poems, which incessantly return and insist upon the same subject, there is one more imposing and lofty, *Manfred*, twin-brother of the greatest poem of the age, Goethe's *Faust*. Goethe says of Byron : 'This singular intellectual poet has taken my Faustus to himself, and extracted from it the strongest nourishment for his hypochondriac humour. He has made use of the impelling principles in his own way, for his own purposes, so that no one of them remains the same ; and it is particularly on this account that I cannot enough admire his genius.' The play is indeed original. Byron writes :

'His (Goethe's) *Faust* I never read, for I don't know German ; but Matthew Monk Lewis, in 1816, at Coligny, translated most of it to me *viva voce*, and I was naturally much struck with it ; but it was the *Steinbach* and the *Jungfrau*, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write *Manfred*.'[2]

Goethe adds : 'The whole is so completely formed anew, that it would be an interesting task for the critic to point out not only the alterations he (Byron) has made, but their degree of resemblance with, or dissimilarity to, the original.' Let us speak of it, then, quite at leisure : the subject here is the dominant idea of the age, expressed so as to display the contrast of two masters and of two nations.

What constitutes Goethe's glory is, that in the nineteenth century he could produce an epic poem—I mean a poem in which genuine gods act and speak. This appeared impossible in the nineteenth century, since the special work of our age is the refined consideration of creative ideas, and the suppression of the poetic characters by which other ages have never failed to represent them. Of the two divine

[1] Byron's Works, x. ; *Darkness*, 283.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 321 ; Letter to Mr. Murray, Ravenna, June 7, 1820.

families, the Greek and the Christian, neither seemed capable of re-entering the epic world. Classic literature had dragged down in its fall the mythological puppets, and the old gods slept on their old Olympus, whither history and archæology alone might go and arouse them. The angels and saints of the Middle-age, as strange and almost as distant, were asleep on the vellum of their missals and in the niches of their cathedrals; and if a poet, like Chateaubriand, tried to make them enter the modern world,[1] he succeeded only in degrading them to the functions of vestry decorations and operatic machinery. The mythic credulity had disappeared in the growth of experience, the mystic in the growth of prosperity. Paganism, at the contact of science, was reduced to the recognition of natural forces; Christianity, at the contact of morality, was reduced to the adoration of the ideal. In order again to deify physical powers, man should have become once more a healthy child, as in Homer's time. In order again to deify spiritual powers, man must have become once more a sickly child, as in Dante's time. But he was an adult, and could not remount to the civilisations, or the epics, from which the current of his thought and his existence had withdrawn him for ever. How show him his gods, the modern gods? how reclothe them for him in a personal and sensible form, since it was precisely of all personal and sensible form that he had toiled and succeeded in despoiling them? Instead of rejecting legend, Goethe resumed it. He chose a mediæval story for his theme. Carefully, scrupulously he followed the track of the old manners and the old beliefs: an alchemist's laboratory, a sorcerer's conjuring-book, coarse villagers, students' or drunkards' gaiety, a witches' meeting on the Brocken, mass in the church; you might fancy you saw an engraving of Luther's time, conscientious and minute: nothing is omitted. Heavenly characters appear in consecrated attitudes, after the text of Scripture, like the old mysteries: the Lord with his angels, then with the devil, who comes to ask permission to tempt Faust, as formerly he tempted Job; heaven, as St. Francis imagined it and Van Eyck painted it, with anchorites, holy women and doctors—some in a landscape with blue-grey rocks, others above in the sublime air, about the glorious Virgin, region beyond region, hovering in choirs. Goethe pushes the affectation of orthodoxy so far as to write under each his Latin name, and his due niche in the Vulgate.[2] And this very fidelity proclaims him a sceptic. We see that if he resuscitates the ancient world, it is as a historian, not as a believer. He is only a Christian through remembrance and poetic feeling. In him the modern spirit overflows designedly the narrow vessel into which he designedly seems to enclose it.

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[1] The angel of holy loves, the angel of the ocean, the choirs of happy spirits. See this at length in the *Martyrs*.

[2] *Magna peccatrix*, S. Lucæ, vii. 36; *Mulier Samaritana*, S. Johannis, iv.; *Maria Ægyptiaca* (Acta Sanctorum), etc.

The thinker penetrates through the narrator. At every instant a calculated word, which seems involuntary, opens up beyond the veils of tradition, glimpses of philosophy. Who are they, these supernaturals, —this god, this Mephistopheles, these angels? Their substance incessantly dissolves and re-forms, to show or hide alternately the idea which fills it. Are they abstractions or characters? Mephistopheles, revolutionary and philosopher, who has read *Candide*, and cynically jeers at the Powers,—is he anything but the 'spirit of negation?'

The angels

> 'Rejoice to share
> The wealth exuberant of all that's fair,
> Which lives, and has its being everywhere!
> And the creative essence which surrounds,
> And lives in all, and worketh evermore,
> Encompass . . . within love's gracious bounds;
> And all the world of things, which flit before
> The gaze in seeming fitful and obscure,
> Do . . . in lasting thoughts embody and secure.'[1]

Are these angels, for an instant at least, anything else than the ideal intelligence which comes, through sympathy, to love all, and through ideas to comprehend all? What shall we say of this Deity, at first biblical and individual, who little by little is unshaped, vanishes, and, sinking to the depths, behind the splendours of living nature and mystic reverie, is confused with the inaccessible absolute? Thus is the whole poem unfolded, action and characters, men and gods, antiquity and Middle-age, aggregate and details, always on the limits of two worlds—one sensitive and figurative, the other intelligible and formless; one comprehending the moving externals of history or of life, and all that hued and perfumed bloom which nature lavishes on the surface of existence, the other containing the profound generative powers and invisible fixed laws by which all these living beings come to the light of day.[2] At last see them, our gods: we no longer parody them, like our ancestors, by idols or persons; we perceive them as they are in themselves, and we need not for this renounce poetry, nor break with the past. We remain on our knees before the shrines where men have prayed for three thousand years; we do not tear a single rose from the chaplets with which they have crowned their divine Madonnas; we do not extinguish a single candle which they have crowded on the altar steps; we behold with an artist's pleasure the precious shrines where, amidst the wrought candlesticks, the suns of diamonds, the gorgeous copes, they have scattered the purest treasures of their genius and their heart. But our thought pierces further than our eyes. For us, at certain moments, these draperies, this marble, all this pomp vacillates; it is

[1] Goethe's *Faust*, translated by Theodore Martin. *Prologue in Heaven.*

[2] Goethe sings: 'Wer ruft das Einselne zur allgemeinen Weihe
Wo es in herrlichen Accorden schlägt?'

no longer aught but beautiful phantoms; it is dispersed in the smoke, and we discover through it and behind it the impalpable ideal, which has set up these pillars, lighted these roofs, and hovered for centuries over the kneeling multitude.

To understand the legend and also to understand life, is the object of this work, and of the whole work of Goethe. Everything, brute or rational, vile or sublime, fantastic or tangible, is a group of powers, of which our mind, through study and sympathy, may reproduce in itself the elements and the disposition. Let us reproduce it, and give it in our thought a new existence. Is a gossip like Martha, babbling and foolish—a drunkard like Frosch, brawling and dirty, and the rest of the Dutch boors—unworthy to enter a picture? Even the female apes, and the apes who sit beside the cauldron, watching that it does not boil over, with their hoarse cries and disordered fancies, may repay the trouble of art in restoring them. Wherever there is life, even bestial or maniacal, there is beauty. The more we look upon nature, the more we find it divine—divine even in rocks and plants. Consider these forests, they seem motionless; but the leaves breathe, and the sap mounts insensibly through the massive trunks and branches, to the slender shoots stretched like fingers at the end of the twigs; it fills the swollen ducts, leaks out in living forms, loads the frail aments with fecund dust, spreads profusely through the air which ferments the vapours and odours: this luminous air, this dome of verdure, this long colonnade of trunks of trees, this silent soil, labour and are transformed; they accomplish a work, and the poet's heart is but to listen to them to find a voice for their obscure instincts. They speak in his heart; still better, they sing, and other beings do the same; each, by its distinct melody, short or long, strange or simple, alone adapted to its nature, capable of manifesting it fully, like a sound, by its pitch, its height, its force, manifests the inner bodily structure, which has produced it. This melody the poet respects; he avoids altering it by the confusion of its ideas or accent; his whole care is to keep it intact and pure. Thus is his work produced, an echo of universal nature, a vast chorus in which gods, men, past, present, all periods of history, all conditions of life, all orders of existence agree without confusion, and in which the flexible genius of the musician, who is alternately transformed into each one of them to interpret and comprehend them, only bears witness to his own thought in giving an insight, beyond this immense harmony, into the group of ideal laws whence it is derived, and the inner reason which sustains it.

Beside this lofty conception, what is the supernatural part of Manfred? Doubtless Byron is moved by the great things of nature; he leaves the Alps; he has seen those glaciers which are like 'a frozen hurricane,'—those 'torrents which roll the sheeted silver's waving column o'er the crag's headlong perpendicular, like the pale courser's tail, as told in the Apocalypse,'—but he has brought nothing from them but

images. His witch, his spirits, his Arimanes, are but stage gods. He believes in them no more than we do. It is wholly otherwise with genuine gods: we must believe them; we must, like Goethe, have assisted long at their birth, like philosophers and scholars; we must have seen of them more than their externals. He who, whilst continuing a poet, becomes a naturalist and geologist, who has followed in the fissures of the rocks the tortuous waters slowly distilled, and driven at length by their own weight to the light, may ask himself, as the Greeks did formerly, when they saw them roll and sparkle in their emerald tints, what they might be thinking, whether they thought. What a strange life is theirs, alternately at rest and in violence! How far removed from ours! With what effort must we tear ourselves from our old and complicated passions, to comprehend the divine youth and simplicity of a being enfranchised from reflection and form! How difficult is such a work for a modern man! How impossible for an Englishman! Shelley, Keats approached it,—thanks to the nervous delicacy of their sickly or overflowing imagination; but how partial still was this approach! And how we feel, on reading them, that they would have needed the aid of public culture, and the aptitude of national genius, which Goethe possessed! That which the whole of civilisation has alone developed in the Englishman, is energetic will and practical faculties. Here man has braced himself up in his efforts, become concentrated in resistance, fond of action, and hence shut out from pure speculation, from wavering sympathy, and from disinterested art. In him metaphysical liberty has perished under utilitarian preoccupation, and pantheistic reverie under moral prejudices. How would he frame to bend his imagination so as to pursue the numberless and fugitive outlines of existences, especially of vague existences? How would he frame to leave his religion so as to reproduce indifferently the powers of indifferent nature? And who is further from flexibility and indifference than he? The flowing water, which in Goethe takes the mould of all the contours of the earth, and which we perceive in the sinuous and luminous distance beneath the golden mist which it exhales, was in Byron suddenly struck into a mass of ice, and makes but a rigid block of crystal. Here, as elsewhere, there is but one character, the same as before. Men, gods, nature, all the changing and multiplex world of Goethe, has vanished. The poet alone subsists, as expressed in his character. Inevitably imprisoned within himself, he could see nothing but himself; if he must come to other existences, it is that they may reply to him; and through this pretended epic he persisted in his eternal monologue.

But again, how all these powers, assembled in a single being, make him great! Into what mediocrity and platitude sinks the *Faust* of Goethe, compared to *Manfred!* As soon as we cease to see humanity in this *Faust*, what does he become? Is he a hero? A sad hero, who has no other task but to speak, to fear, to study the shades of his sen-

sations, and to walk about! His worst action is to seduce a grisette, and to go and dance by night in bad company—two exploits which many a German student has accomplished. His wilfulness is whims, his ideas are longings and dreams. A poet's soul in a scholar's head, both unfit for action, and according ill together; discord within, and weakness without; in short, character is wanting: it is the German character. By his side, what a man is Manfred! He is a man; there is no finer word, or one which could depict him better. He will not, at the sight of a spirit, 'quake like a crawling, cowering, timorous worm.' He will not regret that 'he has neither land, nor pence, nor worldly honours, nor influence.' He will not let himself be duped by the devil like a schoolboy, or go and amuse himself like a cockney with the phantasmagoria of the Brocken. He has lived like a feudal chief, not like a scholar who has taken his degree; he has fought, mastered others; he knows how to master himself. If he is forced into magic arts, it is not from an alchemist's curiosity, but from a spirit of revolt:

'From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh. . . .
My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite, or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave. . . .
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. . . .[1]
I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway—and soothe—and sue—
And watch all time—and pry into all place—
And be a living lie—who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdain'd to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves. . . .[2]

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Manfred*, ii. 2. 32. [2] *Ibid.*; *Manfred*, iii. 1. 56.

He lives alone, and he cannot live alone. The deep source of love, cut off from its natural issues, then overflows and lays waste the heart which refused to expand. He has loved, too well, too near to him, his sister it may be; she has died of it, and impotent remorse has come to fill the soul which no human occupation could satisfy:

'. . . My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies;—I have gnash'd
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—I have pray'd
For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
I have affronted death—but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things pass'd harmless—the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break.
In fantasy, imagination, all
The affluence of my soul. . . . I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dashed me back
Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought. . . .
I dwell in my despair,
And live, and live for ever.'[1]

Let him see her once more: to this sole and all-powerful desire flow all the energies of his soul. He calls her up in the midst of spirits; she appears, but answers not. He prays to her—with what cries, what grievous cries of deep anguish! How he loves! With what yearning and effort all his downtrodden and outcrushed tenderness gushes out and escapes at the sight of those well-beloved eyes, which he sees for the last time! With what enthusiasm his convulsive arms are stretched towards that frail form which, shuddering, has quitted the tomb! —towards those cheeks in which the blood, forcibly recalled, plants 'a strange hectic—like the unnatural red which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.'

'. . . Hear me, hear me—
Astarte! my beloved! speak to me:
I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Manfred*, ii. 2. 35.

I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art—and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all. . . .
Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!'[1]

She speaks. What a sad and doubtful reply! and convulsions spread through Manfred's limbs when she disappears. But an instant after the spirits see that

'. . . He mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will.
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.'[2]

Will is the unshaken basis of this soul. He did not bend before the chief of the spirits; he stood firm and calm before the infernal throne, under the rage of all the demons who would tear him to pieces: now that he dies, and they assail him, he still strives and conquers:

'. . . Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
Is its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time—its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without;
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me—but not yours!'[3]

This 'I,' the invincible I, who suffices to himself, whom nothing can

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Manfred*, ii. 4. 47. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 4. 49. [3] *Ibid.* iii. 4. 70.

hold, demons nor men, the sole author of his own good and ill, a sort of suffering or fallen god, but god always, even in its torn flesh, through the mire and bruises of all his destinies,—such is the hero and the work of this mind, and of the men of his race. If Goethe was the poet of the *universe*, Byron was the poet of the *individual;* and if in one the German genius found its interpreter, the English genius found its interpreter in the other.

V.

We can well imagine that Englishmen clamoured, and repudiated the monster. Southey, poet-laureate, said of him, in a fine biblical style, that he savoured of Moloch and Belial—most of all, of Satan; and, with the generosity of a fellow-literary man, called the attention of Government to him. We should fill many pages, if we were to copy the reproaches of the respectable reviews against these 'men of diseased hearts and depraved imaginations, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society; and, hating that revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve, labour to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul.'[1] This sounds like the emphasis of an episcopal charge and of scholastic pedantry: in England the press does the duty of the police, and it never did it more violently than at that time. Opinion backed the press. Several times, in Italy, Lord Byron saw gentlemen leave a drawing-room with their wives, when he was announced. Owing to his title and celebrity, the scandal which he caused was more prominent than any other: he was a public sinner. One day an obscure parson sent him a prayer which he had found amongst the papers of his wife—a charming and pious lady, recently dead, and who had secretly prayed to God for the conversion of the great sinner. Conservative and Protestant England, after a quarter of a century of moral wars, and two centuries of moral education, had pushed its severity and rigour to extremes; and Puritan intolerance, like Catholic intolerance previously in Spain, put recusants out of the pale of the law. The proscription of voluptuous or abandoned life, the narrow observation of order and decency, the respect of all police, human and divine; the necessary bows at the mere name of Pitt, of the king, the church, the God of the Bible; the attitude of the gentleman in a white tie, conventional, inflexible, implacable,—such were the customs then met with across the Channel, a hundred times more tyrannical than now-a-days: at that time, as Stendhal says, a peer at his fireside dared not cross his legs, for fear of its being improper. England held herself stiff, uncomfortably laced in her stays of decorum. Hence arose two sources of misery: a man suffers, and

[1] Southey, Preface to *A Vision of Judgment.*

is tempted to throw down the ugly choking apparatus, when convinced he is alone. On one side constraint, on the other hypocrisy—these are the two vices of English civilisation; and it was these which Byron, with his poet's discernment and his combative instincts, attacked.

He had seen them from the first; true artists are perspicacious: it is in this that they outstrip us; we judge from hearsay and formulas, like cockneys; they, like eccentric beings, from accomplished facts, and things: at twenty-two he perceived the tedium born of constraint desolating all high life:

> 'There stands the noble hostess, nor shall sink
> With the three-thousandth curtsy; . . .
> Saloon, room, hall, o'erflow beyond their brink,
> And long the latest of arrivals halts,
> 'Midst royal dukes and dames condemn'd to climb,
> And gain an inch of staircase at a time.'[1]

He also sneered in his letters at the distinguished company in the country, and at the conduct of gentlemen after dinner—above all, on hunting days. Most of them fall asleep. As for the morals of the upper classes, this is what he says:

'Went to my box at Covent Garden to-night. . . . Casting my eyes round the house, in the next box to me, and the next, and the next, were the most distinguished old and young Babylonians of quality. . . . It was as if the house had been divided between your public and your understood courtesans;—but the intriguantes much outnumbered the regular mercenaries. Now, where lay the difference between Pauline and her mother, . . . and Lady * * and daughter? except that the two last may enter Carlton and any other house, and the two first are limited to the Opera and b— house. How I do delight in observing life as it really is!—and myself, after all, the worst of any!'[2]

Decorum and debauchery; moral hypocrites, 'qui mettent leurs vertus en mettant leurs gants blancs;'[3] an oligarchy which, to preserve its dignities and its sinecures, ravages Europe, preys on Ireland, and holds in the mob by high words of virtue, Christianity, and liberty: there was truth in all these invectives.[4] It is only thirty years since the ascendency of the middle class has diminished the privileges and corruptions of the great; but at that time rude words could be thrown at their heads. Byron said, quoting from Voltaire:

'"La Pudeur s'est enfuie des cœurs, et s'est refugiée sur les lèvres." . . . "Plus les mœurs sont dépravées, plus les expressions deviennent mesurées; on croit regagner en langage ce qu'on a perdu en vertu." This is the real fact, as applicable to the degraded and hypocritical mass which leavens the present English generation; and it is the only answer they deserve. . . . *Cant* is the crying sin of this double-dealing and false-speaking time of selfish spoilers.'[5]

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[1] Byron's Works, xvii.; *Don Juan*, c. 11, st. lxvii.

[2] *Ibid.* iii. 304; *Journal*, Dec. 17, 1813.

[3] Alfred de Musset.

[4] See his terrible satirical poem, *The Vision of Judgment*, against Southey, George IV., and official pomp.

[5] Byron's Works, xvi. 131; Preface to *Don Juan*, cantos vi. vii. and viii.

And then he wrote his masterpiece, *Don Juan*.[1]

All here was new, form and foundation; for he had entered into a new world. The Englishman, the Northman, transplanted amongst southern manners and into Italian life, had become imbued with a new sap, which made him bear new fruit. He had been induced to read[2] the rather free satires of Buratti, and the still more voluptuous sonnets of Baffo. He lived in the happy Venetian society, still exempt from political animosities, where care seemed a folly, where life was looked upon as a carnival, pleasure ran through the streets, not timid and hypocritical, but loosely arrayed and commended. He had amused himself here, hotly at first, more than sufficient, and even more than too much, almost with the effect of killing himself; but after vulgar gallantries, having entered upon a genuine love, he had become a *cavalier' servente*, after the fashion of the land, with the consent of the family, offering his arm, carrying a shawl, a little awkwardly at first, and wonderingly, but on the whole happier than he had ever been, and fanned by a warm breath of pleasure and *abandon*. He had seen the overthrow of all English morality, conjugal infidelity established as a rule, amorous fidelity raised to a duty:

'There is no convincing a woman here that she is in the smallest degree deviating from the rule of right or the fitness of things in having an *amoroso*.[3] . . . Love (the sentiment of love) is not merely an excuse for it, but makes it an actual virtue, provided it is disinterested, and not a caprice, and is confined to one object.'[4]

A little later he translated the *Morgante Maggiore* of Pulci, to show

'What was permitted in a Catholic country and a bigoted age to a churchman on the score of religion, and to silence those buffoons who accuse me of attacking the Liturgy.'[5]

He rejoiced in this liberty and this ease, and resolved never to fall again under the pedantic inquisition, which in his country had condemned and damned him past forgiveness. He wrote his *Beppo* like an improvisatore, with a charming freedom, a flowing and fantastic lightness of mood, and contrasted in it the recklessness and happiness of Italy with the prejudices and repulsiveness of England:

'I like . . . to see the Sun set, sure he'll rise to-morrow,
Not through a misty morning twinkling weak as
A drunken man's dead eye in maudlin sorrow,
But with all Heaven t' himself; that day will break as
Beauteous as cloudless, nor be forced to borrow
That sort of farthing candlelight which glimmers
Where reeking London's smoky caldron simmers.

[1] *Don Juan* is a satire on the abuses in the present state of society, and not a eulogy of vice.

[2] Stendhal, *Mémoires sur Lord Byron*.

[3] Byron's Works, iii. 333; Letter to Murray, Venice, Jan. 2, 1817.

[4] *Ibid.* iii. 363; Letter to Moore, Venice, March 25, 1817.

[5] *Ibid.* iv. 279; Letter to Murray, Ravenna, Feb. 7, 1820.

I love the language, that soft bastard Latin,
Which melts like kisses from a female mouth,
Which sounds as if it should be writ on satin,
With syllables which breathe of the sweet South,
And gentle liquids gliding all so pat in,
That not a single accent seems uncouth,
Like our harsh northern whistling, grunting guttural,
Which we're obliged to hiss, and spit, and sputter all.

I like the women too (forgive my folly),
From the rich peasant cheek of ruddy bronze,
And large black eyes that flash on you a volley
Of rays that say a thousand things at once,
To the high dama's brow, more melancholy,
But clear, and with a wild and liquid glance,
Heart on her lips, and soul within her eyes,
Soft as her clime, and sunny as her skies.'[1]

With other manners there was here another morality; there is one for every age, race, and sky—I mean that the ideal model varies with the circumstances which fashion it. In England the severity of the climate, the warlike energy of the race, and the liberty of the institutions prescribe an active life, strict manners, Puritan religion, the marriage bond, the sentiment of duty and self-command. In Italy the beauty of the climate, the innate sense of the beautiful, and the despotism of the government induced a leisurely life, relaxed manners, imaginative religion, the culture of the arts, and the study of happiness. Each model has its beauties and its blots,—the epicurean artist like the political moralist;[2] each shows by its greatnesses the littlenesses of the other, and, to set in relief the disadvantages of the second, Lord Byron had only to set in relief the seductions of the first.

Thereupon he went in search of a hero, and did not find one, which, in this age of heroes, is 'an uncommon want.' For lack of a better he chose 'our ancient friend Don Juan,'—a scandalous choice: what an outcry the English moralists will make! But, to cap the horror, this Don Juan is not wicked, selfish, odious, like his fellows; he does not seduce, he is no corrupter. When the occasion rises, he lets himself drift; he has a heart and senses, and, under a beautiful sun, all this feels itself drawn out: at sixteen a youth cannot help himself, nor at twenty, nor perhaps at thirty. Lay it to the charge of human nature, my dear moralists; it is not I who made it as it is. If you will grumble, address yourselves higher: here we are painters, not makers of human puppets, and we do not answer for the structure of our dancing-dolls. Look, then, at our Juan as he goes along; he goes about in many places, and in all he is young; we will not strike him with thunder, therefore;

[1] Byron's Works, xi.; *Beppo*, c. xliii.–xlv. 121.

[2] See Stendhal, *Vie de Giacomo Rossini*, and Stanley's *Life of D'Arnold*. The contrast is complete. See also in *Corinne*, where this opposition is very clearly grasped.

that fashion is past: the green devils and their capers only come on the stage in the last act of Mozart. And, moreover, Juan is so amiable! After all, what has he done that others don't do? If he has been a lover of Catherine II., he only followed the lead of the diplomatic corps and the whole Russian army. Let him sow his wild oats; the good grain will spring up in its time. Once in England, he will behave himself decently. I confess that he may even there, when provoked, go a gleaning in the conjugal gardens of the aristocracy; but in the end he will settle, go and pronounce moral speeches in Parliament, become a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice. If you wish absolutely to have him punished, we will make him end in hell, or in an unhappy marriage, not knowing which would be the severest. The Spanish tradition says hell; but it probably is only an allegory of the other state.[1]

At all events, married or damned, the good folk at the end of the piece will have the pleasure of knowing that he is burning all alive.

Is it not a singular apology? Would it not aggravate the fault? Wait; you know not yet the whole venom of the book: together with Juan there are Donna Julia, Haidee, Gulbeyaz, Dudu, and the rest. It is here the diabolical poet digs in his sharpest claw, and he takes care to dig it into our foibles. What will the clergymen and white-chokered reviewers say? For, in short, there is no preventing it: we must read, in spite of ourselves. Twice or three times following we meet here with *happiness;* and when I say happiness, I mean profound and complete happiness—not mere voluptuousness, not obscene gaiety: we are miles away from the pretty rascalities of Dorat, and the unbridled licence of Rochester. Beauty is here, southern beauty, sparkling and harmonious, spread over everything, over the luminous sky, the calm scenery, corporal nudity, freshness of heart. Is there a thing it does not deify? All sentiments are exalted under his hands. What was gross becomes noble; even in the nocturnal adventure in the seraglio, which seems worthy of Faublas, poetry embellishes licentiousness. The girls are lying in the large silent apartment, like precious flowers brought from all climates into a conservatory:

> 'One with her flush'd cheek laid on her white arm,
> And raven ringlets gather'd in dark crowd
> Above her brow, lay dreaming soft and warm; . . .
> One with her auburn tresses lightly bound,
> And fair brows gently drooping, as the fruit
> Nods from the tree, was slumbering with soft breath,
> And lips apart, which show'd the pearls beneath. . . .
> A fourth as marble, statue-like and still,
> Lay in a breathless, hush'd, and stony sleep;
> White, cold, and pure . . . a carved lady on a monument.'[2]

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[1] Byron's Works, v. 127; Letter to Mr. Murray, Ravenna, Feb. 16, 1821.

[2] *Ibid.* xvi.; *Don Juan*, c. vi. st. lxvi. lxviii.

However, 'the fading lamps waned dim and blue;' Dudu is asleep, the innocent girl; and if she has cast a glance on her glass,

> 'Twas like the fawn, which, in the lake display'd,
> Beholds her own shy, shadowy image pass,
> When first she starts, and then returns to peep,
> Admiring this new native of the deep.'[1]

What will become now of Puritan prudery? Can the proprieties prevent beauty from being beautiful? Will you condemn a Titian for its nudity? What gives a value to human life, and a nobility to human nature, if not the power of attaining delicious and sublime emotions? You have just had one—one worthy of a painter; is it not worth that of an alderman? Will you refuse to acknowledge the divine because it appears in art and enjoyment, and not only in conscience and action? There is a world beside yours, and a civilisation beside yours; your rules are narrow, and your pedantry pedantic; the human plant can be otherwise developed than in your compartments and under your snows, and the fruits it will then bear will not be less precious. You must confess it, since you relish them when they are offered you. Who has read the love of Haidee, and has had any other thought than to envy and pity her? She is a wild child who has picked up Juan—another child cast ashore senseless by the waves. She has preserved him, nursed him like a mother, and now she loves him: who can blame her for loving him? Who, in presence of the splendid nature which smiles on and protects them, can imagine for them anything else than the all-powerful feeling which unites them:

> 'It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
> With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
> Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host, . . .
> And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
> Save on the dead long summer days, which make
> The outstretch'd ocean glitter like a lake. . . .
>
> And all was stillness, save the sea-bird's cry,
> And dolphin's leap, and little billow crost
> By some low rock or shelve, that made it fret
> Against the boundary it scarcely wet. . . .
>
> And thus they wander'd forth, and hand in hand,
> Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
> Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
> And in the worn and wild receptacles
> Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were plann'd,
> In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
> They turn'd to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
> Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

[1] Byron's Works, *Don Juan*, c. vi. st. lx.

They look'd up to the sky whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
They heard the wave's splash, and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other—and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss. . . .

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay
The twilight glow, which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.'[1]

An excellent opportunity to introduce here your formularies and catechisms:

'Haidée spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows,
Nor offer'd any . . .
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
And flew to her young mate like a young bird.'[2]

Nature suddenly expands, for she is ripe, like a bud bursting into bloom, nature in her fulness, instinct, and heart:

'Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
And, having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity can not annul.'[3] . . .

O admirable moralists, you stand before these two flowers like patented gardeners, holding in your hands the model of bloom sanctioned by your society of horticulture, proving that the model has not been followed, and deciding that the two weeds must be cast into the fire, which you keep burning to consume irregular growths. Well judged: you know your art.

Beyond British cant, there is universal hypocrisy; beyond English pedantry, Byron wars against human roguery. Here is the general aim of the poem, and to this his character and genius tended. His great and gloomy dreams of juvenile imagination have vanished; experience has come; he knows man now; and what is man, once known? Does the sublime abound in him? Do you think that the great sentiments—those of Childe Harold, for instance—are the ordinary course of

[1] Byron's Works, xv.; *Don Juan*, c. ii. st. clxxvii.–clxxxviii.
[2] *Ibid.* st cxc. [3] *Ibid.* c. ii. st. cxcii.

his life?[1] The truth is, that he employs most of his time in sleeping, dining, yawning, working like a horse, amusing himself like an ape. According to Byron, he is an animal; except for a few minutes, his nerves, his blood, his instincts lead him. Routine works over it all, necessity whips him on, the animal advances. As the animal is proud, and moreover imaginative, it pretends to be marching for its own pleasure, that there is no whip, that at all events this whip rarely touches its flanks, that at least his stoic back can make as if it did not feel it. It is harnessed in imagination with the most splendid trappings, and thus struts on with measured steps, fancying that it carries relics and treads on carpets and flowers, whilst in reality it tramples in the mud, and carries with it the stains and stinks of every dunghill. What a pastime to touch its mangy back, to set before its eyes the sacks full of flour which load it, and the goad which makes it go![2] What a pretty farce! It is the eternal farce; and not a sentiment thereof but provides him with an act: love in the first place. Certainly Donna Julia is very lovable, and Byron loves her; but she comes out of his hands, as rumpled as any other. She has virtue, of course; and better, she desires to have it. She plies herself, in connection with Don Juan, with the finest arguments; a fine thing are arguments, and how proper they are to check passion! Nothing can be more solid than a firm purpose, propped up by logic, resting on the fear of the world, the thought of God, the recollection of duty; nothing can prevail against it, except a *tête-à-tête* in June, on a moonlight evening. At last the deed is done, and the poor timid lady is surprised by her outraged husband; in what a situation! There anent read the book. Of course she will be speechless, ashamed and full of tears, and the moral reader duly reckons on her remorse. My dear reader, you have not reckoned on impulse and nerves. To-morrow she will feel shame; the business is now to overwhelm the husband, to deafen him, to confound him, to save Juan, to save herself, to fight. The war having begun, it is waged with all kinds of weapons, firstly with audacity and insults. The single idea, the present need, absorbs all others: it is in this that woman is a woman. This Julia cries lustily. It is a regular storm: hard words and recriminations, mockery and defiance, fainting and tears. In a quarter of an hour she has gained twenty years' experience. You did not know, nor she either, what an actress can emerge, all on a sudden, unforeseen, out of a simple woman. Do you know what can emerge from yourself? You think yourself rational, human; I admit it for to-day; you have dined, and you are

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[1] Byron says (v., Oct. 12, 1820), 'Don Juan is too true, and would, I suspect, live longer than Childe Harold. The women hate many things which strip off the tinsel of sentiment.'

[2] *Don Juan*, c. vii. st. 2. I hope it is no crime to laugh at *all* things. For I wish to know *what*, after *all*, are *all* things—but a *show?*

at ease in a pleasant room. Your machine does its duty without disorder, because the wheels are oiled and well regulated; but place it in a shipwreck, a battle, let the failing or the plethora of blood for an instant derange the chief pieces, and we shall see you howling or drivelling like a madman or an idiot. Civilisation, education, reason, health, cloak us in their smooth and polished cases; let us tear them away one by one, or all together, and we laugh to see the brute, who is lying at the bottom. Here is our friend Juan reading Julia's last letter, and swearing in a transport never to forget the beautiful eyes which he caused to weep so much. Was ever feeling more tender or sincere? But unfortunately Juan is at sea, and sickness sets in. He cries out:

'Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea,
Than I resign thine image, oh, my fair! . . .
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick.) . . .
Sooner shall heaven kiss earth—(here he fell sicker.)
Oh Julia! what is every other woe?
(For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor;
Pedro, Battista, help me down below).
Julia, my love!—(You rascal, Pedro, quicker)—
Oh, Julia!—(this curst vessel pitches so)
Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!
(Here he grew inarticulate with retching.) . . .

Love's a capricious power . . .
Against all noble maladies he's bold,
But vulgar illnesses don't like to meet; . . .
Shrinks from the application of hot towels,
And purgatives are dangerous to his reign,
Sea-sickness death.'[1] . . .

Many other things cause the death of Love.

'Tis melancholy, and a fearful sign
Of human frailty, folly, also crime,
That love and marriage rarely can combine,
Although they both are born in the same clime;
Marriage from love, like vinegar from wine—
A sad, sour, sober beverage.[2] . . .
An honest gentleman, at his return,
May not have the good fortune of Ulysses; . . .
The odds are that he finds a handsome urn
To his memory—and two or three young misses
Born to some friend, who holds his wife and riches,—
And that *his* Argus bites him by—the breeches.'[3]

These are the words of a sceptic, even of a cynic. Sceptic and cynic, it is in this he ends. Sceptic through misanthropy, cynic through bravado, a sad and combative humour always impels him; southern

[1] Byron's Works, xv.; *Don Juan*, c. ii. st. xix.–xxiii.
[2] *Ibid.* c. iii. st. v. [3] *Ibid.* c. iii. st. xxiii.

voluptuousness has not conquered him; he is only an epicurean through contradiction and for a moment:

> 'Let us have wine and women, mirth and laughter,
> Sermons and soda-water the day after.
> Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
> The best of life is but intoxication.'[1]

You see clearly that he is always the same, in excess and unhappy, bent on destroying himself. His *Don Juan*, also, is a debauchery; in it he diverts himself outrageously at the expense of all respectable things, as a bull in a china shop. He is always violent, and often ferocious; black imagination brings into his stories horrors leisurely enjoyed, —despair and famine of shipwrecked men, and the emaciation of the raging skeletons feeding on each other. He laughs at it horribly, like Swift; more, he plays the buffoon over it, like Voltaire:

> 'And next they thought upon the master's mate,
> As fattest; but he saved himself, because,
> Besides being much averse from such a fate,
> There were some other reasons: the first was,
> He had been rather indisposed of late;
> And that which chiefly proved his saving clause,
> Was a small present made to him at Cadiz,
> By general subscription of the ladies.'[2]

With his specimens in hand,[3] Byron follows with a surgeon's exactness all the stages of death, satiation, rage, madness, howling, exhaustion, stupor; he wishes to touch and exhibit the naked and ascertained truth, the last grotesque and hideous element of humanity. Look again at the assault on Ismail,—the grape-shot and the bayonet, the street massacres, the corpses used as fascines, and the thirty-eight thousand slaughtered Turks. There is blood enough to satiate a tiger, and this blood flows amidst an accompaniment of jests; it is in order to rail at war, and the butcheries dignified with the name of exploits. In this pitiless and universal demolition of all human vanities, what subsists? What do we know except that life is 'a scene of all-confess'd inanity,' and that men are,

> 'Dogs, or men!—for I flatter you in saying
> That ye are dogs—your betters far—ye may
> Read, or read not, what I am now essaying
> To show ye what ye are in every way?'[4]

What does he find in science but deficiencies, and in religion but mummeries?[5] Does he so much as preserve poetry? Of the divine

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[1] Byron's Works, xv.; *Don Juan*, c. ii. st. clxxviii., clxxix.
[2] *Ibid.* c. ii. st. lxxxi.
[3] Byron had before him a dozen authentic descriptions.
[4] Byron's Works, xvi.; *Don Juan*, c. vii. st. 7.
[5] See his *Vision of Judgment.*

mantle, the last garment which a poet respects, he makes a rag to stamp upon, to wring, to make holes in, out of sheer wantonness. At the most touching moment of Haidée's love, he vents a buffoonery. He concludes an ode with caricatures. He is Faust in the first verse, and Mephistopheles in the second. He employs, in the midst of tenderness or of murder, penny-print witticisms, trivialities, gossip, with a pamphleteer's vilification and a buffoon's whimsicalities. He lays bare the poetic method, asks himself where he has got to, counts the stanzas already done, jokes the Muse, Pegasus, and the whole epic stud, as though he wouldn't give twopence for them. Again, what remains? Himself, he alone, standing amidst all this ruin. It is he who speaks here; his characters are but screens; half the time even he pushes them aside, to occupy the stage. He lavishes upon us his opinions, recollections, angers, tastes; his poem is a conversation, a confidence, with the ups and downs, the rudeness and freedom of a conversation and a confidence, almost like the olographic journal, in which, by night, at his writing-table, he opened his heart and discharged his feelings. Never was seen in such a clear glass the birth of a lively thought, the tumult of a great genius, the inner life of a genuine poet, always impassioned, inexhaustibly fertile and creative, in whom suddenly, successively, finished and adorned, bloomed all human emotions and ideas,—sad, gay, lofty, low, hustling one another, mutually impeded like swarms of insects who go humming and feeding on flowers and in the mud. He may say what he will; willingly or unwillingly we listen to him; let him leap from sublime to burlesque, we leap then with him. He has so much wit, so fresh a wit, so sudden, so biting, such a prodigality of knowledge, ideas, images picked up from the four corners of the horizon, in heaps and masses, that we are captivated, transported beyond limits; we cannot dream of resisting. Too vigorous, and hence unbridled,—that is the word which ever recurs when we speak of Byron; too vigorous against others and himself, and so unbridled, that after spending his life in braving the world, and his poetry in depicting revolt, he can only find the fulfilment of his talent and the satisfaction of his heart, in a poem in arms against all human and poetic conventions. To live so, a man must be great, but he must also become deranged. There is a derangement of heart and mind in the style of *Don Juan*, as in Swift. When a man jests amidst his tears, it is because he has a poisoned imagination. This kind of laughter is a spasm, and you see in one man a hardening of the heart, or madness; in another, excitement or disgust. Byron was exhausted, at least the poet was exhausted in him. The last cantos of *Don Juan* drag: the gaiety became forced, the escapades became digressions; the reader began to be bored. A new kind of poetry, which he had attempted, had given way in his hands: in the drama he only attained to powerful declamation, his characters had no life; when he forsook poetry, poetry forsook him; he went to Greece in search of action, and only found death.

VI.

So lived and so ended this unhappy great man; the malady of the age had no more distinguished prey. Around him, like a hecatomb, lie the rest, wounded also by the greatness of their faculties and their immoderate desires,—some extinguished in stupor or drunkenness, others worn out by pleasure or work; these driven to madness or suicide; those beaten down by impotence, or lying on a sick-bed; all agitated by their too acute or aching nerves; the strongest carrying their bleeding wound to old age, the happiest having suffered as much as the rest, and preserving their scars, though healed. The concert of their lamentations has filled their age, and we stood around them, hearing in our hearts the low echo of their cries. We were sad like them, and like them inclined to revolt. The institution of democracy excited our ambitions without satisfying them; the proclamation of philosophy kindled our curiosity without contenting it. In this wide-open career, the plebeian suffered for his mediocrity, and the sceptic for his doubt. The plebeian, like the sceptic, attacked by a precocious melancholy, and withered by a premature experience, delivered his sympathies and his conduct to the poets, who declared happiness impossible, truth unattainable, society ill-arranged, man abortive or marred. From this unison of voices an idea sprang, the centre of the literature, the arts, the religion of the age,—that there is, namely, a monstrous disproportion between the different parts of our social structure, and that human destiny is vitiated by this disagreement.

What advice have they given us for its remedy? They were great; were they wise? 'Let deep and strong sensations rain upon you; if your machine breaks, so much the worse!' 'Cultivate your garden, bury yourself in a little circle, re-enter the flock, be a beast of burden.' 'Turn believer again, take holy water, abandon your mind to dogmas, and your conduct to handbooks.' 'Make your way; aspire to power, honours, wealth.' Such are the various replies of artists and citizens, Christians, and men of the world. Are they replies? And what do they propose but to satiate one's self, to become beasts, to turn out of the way, to forget? There is another and a deeper answer, which Goethe was the first to give, which we begin to conceive, in which issue all the labour and experience of the age, and which may perhaps be the subject-matter of future literature: 'Try to understand yourself, and things in general.' A strange reply, seeming barely new, whose scope we shall only hereafter discover. For a long time yet men will feel their sympathies thrill at the sound of the sobs of their great poets. For a long time they will rage against a destiny which opens to their aspirations the career of limitless space, to shatter them, within two steps of the goal, against a wretched post which they had not seen. For a long time they will bear like fetters the necessities which they must embrace as laws. Our generation, like the preceding, has been

tainted by the malady of the age, and will never more than half be quit of it. We shall arrive at truth, not at calm. All we can heal at present is our intellect; we have no hold upon our sentiments. But we have a right to conceive for others the hopes which we no longer entertain for ourselves, and to prepare for our descendants the happiness which we shall never enjoy. Brought up in a more wholesome air, they mayhap will have a wholesomer heart. The reformation of ideas ends by reforming the rest, and the light of the mind produces serenity of heart. Hitherto, in our judgments on men, we have taken for our masters the oracles and poets, and like them we have received for certain truths the noble dreams of our imagination and the imperious suggestions of our heart. We have bound ourselves to the partiality of religious divinations, and the inexactness of literary divinations, and we have shaped our doctrines by our instincts and our vexations. Science at last approaches, and approaches man; it has gone beyond the visible and palpable world of stars, stones, plants, amongst which man disdainfully confined her. It reaches the heart, provided with exact and penetrating implements, whose justness has been proved, and their reach measured by three hundred years of experience. Thought, with its development and rank, its structure and relations, its deep material roots, its infinite growth through history, its lofty bloom at the summit of things, becomes the object of science,—an object which, sixty years ago, it foresaw in Germany, and which, slowly and surely probed, by the same methods as the physical world, will be transformed before our eyes, as the physical world has been transformed. It is already being transformed, and we have left behind us the point of view of Byron and our poets. No, man is not an abortion or a monster; no, the business of poetry is not to revolt or defame him. He is in his place, and completes a chain. Let us watch him grow and increase, and we shall cease to rail at or curse him. He, like everything else, is a product, and as such it is right he should be what he is. His innate imperfection is in order, like the constant abortion of a stamen in a plant, like the fundamental irregularity of four facets in a crystal. What we took for a deformity, is a form; what seemed to us the contradiction, is the accomplishment of a law. Human reason and virtue have as their elements animal instincts and images, as living forms have for theirs physical laws, as organic matters have for theirs mineral substances. What wonder if virtue or reason, like living form or organic matter, sometimes fails or decomposes, since like them, and like every superior and complex existence, they have for support and control inferior and simple forces, which, according to circumstances, now maintain it by their harmony, now mar it by their discord? What wonder if the elements of existence, like those of quantity, receive, from their very nature, the irresistible laws which constrain and reduce them to a certain species and order of formation? Who will rise up against geometry? Who,

especially, will rise up against a living geometry? Who will not, on the other hand, feel moved with admiration at the sight of those grand powers which, situated at the heart of things, incessantly urge the blood through the limbs of the old world, disperse the showers in the infinite network of arteries, and spread over the whole surface the eternal flower of youth and beauty? Who, in short, will not feel himself ennobled, when he finds that this pile of laws results in a regular series of forms, that matter has thought for its goal, and that this ideal from which, through so many errors, all the aspirations of men depend, is also the centre whereto converge, through so many obstacles, all the forces of the universe? In this employment of science, and in this conception of things, there is a new art, a new morality, a new polity, a new religion, and it is in the present time our task to discover them.

CHAPTER III.

The Past and the Present.

I. The past—The Saxon invasion—How it established the race and determined the character—The Norman Conquest—How it modified the character and established the Constitution—The Renaissance—How it manifested the national mind—The Reformation—How it fixed the ideal—The Restoration—How it imported classical culture and diverted the national mind—The Revolution—How it developed classical culture and restored the national mind—The modern age—How European ideas widened the national mould.

II. The present—Concordances of observation and history—Sky—Soil—Products—Man—Commerce—Industry—Agriculture—Society—Family—Arts—Philosophy—Religion—What forces have produced the present civilisation, and are working out the future civilisation.

§ 1.

I.

HAVING reached the limits of this long review, we can now embrace in one prospect the aggregate of English civilisation: everything is connected there: a few powers and a few primitive circumstances have produced the rest, and we have only to pursue their continuous action in order to comprehend the nation and its history, its past and its present. At the beginning, and furthest removed in the region of causes, comes the race. A whole people, Angles and Saxons, destroyed, hunted out, or enslaved the old inhabitants, wiped out the Roman culture, settled themselves alone and pure, and, amongst the later Danish ravagers, only encountered a new reinforcement of the same blood. This is the primitive stock: of its substance and innate properties is to spring almost the whole future growth. At this time, and as they then were, alone in their island, the Angles and Saxons attained a development such as it was, defaced, brutal, and yet solid. They ate and drank, built and cleared ground, and, in particular, multiplied: the scattered tribes who crossed the sea in leather boats, became a strong compact nation,—three hundred thousand families, rich, with store of cattle, abundantly provided with corporal subsistence, partly at rest in the security of social life, with a king, respected and frequent

assemblies, good judicial customs: here, amidst the fire and vehemence of barbarian temperament, the old Germanic fidelity held men in unison, whilst the old Germanic independence held them upright. In all else they barely advanced. A few fragmentary songs, an epic in which still is faintly heard the warlike exaltation of ancient barbarism, gloomy hymns, a harsh and furious poetry, sometimes sublime and always rude,—this is all that remains of them. In six centuries they had scarcely gone one step beyond the manners and sentiments of their uncivilised Germany: Christianity, which obtained a hold on them by the greatness of its biblical tragedies and the troubled sadness of its aspirations, did not bring to them the Latin civilisation: this remained at the door, hardly accepted by a few great men, deformed, when it did enter, by the disproportion of the Roman and Saxon genius—always altered and reduced; so much so, that for the men of the Continent these islanders were but illiterate dullards, drunkards, and gluttons; at all events, savage and slow by mood and nature, rebellious against culture, and sluggish in development.

The empire of this world belongs to force. These people were conquered for ever and permanently,—conquered by Normans, that is, by Frenchmen more clever, more quickly cultivated and organised than they. This is the great event which was to complete their character, decide their history, and impress upon character and history the political and practical spirit which separates them from other German nations. Oppressed, constrained in the stiff net of Norman organisation, although they were conquered, they were not destroyed; they were on their own soil, each with his friends and in his tithings; they formed a body; they were yet twenty times more numerous than their conquerors. Their situation and their necessities will create their habits and their aptitudes. They will endure, protest, struggle, resist together and unanimously; strive to-day, to-morrow, daily, not to be slain or plundered, to restore their old laws, to obtain or extort guarantees; and they will gradually acquire patience, judgment, all the faculties and inclinations by which liberties are maintained and states are founded. By a singular good fortune, the Norman lords assist them in this; for the king has secured to himself so much, and is found so formidable, that, in order to repress the great pillager, the lesser ones are forced to make use of their Saxon subjects, to ally themselves with them, to give them a share in their charters, to become their representatives, to admit them into Parliament, to leave them to labour freely, to grow rich, to acquire pride, force authority, to interfere with themselves in public affairs. Thus, then, gradually the English nation, buried by the Conquest under ground, as if with a sledge-hammer, extricates and raises itself; five hundred years and more being occupied in this re-elevation. But, during all this time, leisure failed for fine and lofty culture: it was needful to live and defend themselves, to dig the ground, spin wool, bend the bow, attend meetings, juries, to

contribute and argue for common interests: the important and respected man is he who knows well how to fight and get much gain. It was the energetic and warlike manners which were developed, the active and positive spirit which predominated; they left learning and elegance to the Gallicised nobles of the court. When the valiant Saxon townsfolk quitted bow and plough, it was to feast copiously, or to sing the ballad of 'Robin Hood.' They lived and acted; they did not reflect or write; their national literature was reduced to fragments and rudiments, harpers' songs, tavern epics, a religious poem, a few books on religious reformation. At the same time Norman literature faded; separated from the stem, and on a foreign soil, it languished in imitations; only one great poet, almost French in mind, quite French in style, appeared, and, after him, as before him, spread an incurable drivel of words. For the second time, a civilisation of five centuries was found sterile of great ideas and works; this still more so than its neighbours, and for a twofold reason,—because to the universal impotence of the Middle-age was added the impoverishment of the Conquest, and because of the two component literatures, one, transplanted, became abortive, and the other, mutilated, ceased to expand.

II.

But amongst so many rough draughts and attempts, a character was formed, and the rest was to spring from it. The barbarous age had established on the soil a German race, phlegmatic and grave, capable of spiritual emotions and moral discipline. The feudal age had imposed on this race habits of resistance and association, political and utilitarian prejudices. Fancy a German from Hamburg or Bremen confined for five hundred years in the iron corslet of William the Conqueror: these two natures, one innate, the other acquired, constitute all the springs of his conduct. So it was in other nations. Like runners drawn up in line at the start of the race, we see at the epoch of the Renaissance the five great peoples of Europe let loose, though we are unable at first to foresee anything of their career. At first sight it seems as if accidents or circumstances will govern their pace, their fall, and their success. It is not so: from them alone their history depends: each will be the artisan of its fortune; chance has no influence over events so vast; and it is national inclinations and faculties which, overturning or raising obstacles, will lead them, according to their fate, each one to its goal,—some to the extreme of decadence, others to the height of prosperity. After all, man is ever his own master and his own slave. At the outset of every age he in a certain fashion *is:* his body, heart, mind have a distinct structure and disposition; and from this enduring arrangement, which all preceding centuries have contributed to consolidate or to construct, spring permanent desires or aptitudes, by which he determines and acts. Thus is formed in him the ideal model, which, obscure or dis-

tinct, complete or rough-hewn, will thenceforth float before his eyes, rally all his aspirations, efforts, forces, and will occupy him for centuries in one aim, until at length, renewed by impotence or success, he conceives a new end, and assumes a new energy. The Catholic and exalted Spaniard figures life like the Crusaders, lovers, knights, and, abandoning labour, liberty, and science, casts himself, at the head of his inquisition and his king, into fanatical war, romanesque slothfulness, superstitious and impassioned obedience, voluntary and irresistible ignorance.[1] The theological and feudal German settles in his district docilely and faithfully under his petty chiefs, through natural patience and hereditary loyalty, engrossed by his wife and household, content to have conquered religious liberty, clogged by the dulness of his temperament in gross physical existence, and in sluggish respect for established order. The Italian, the most richly gifted and precocious of all, but, of all, the most incapable of voluntary discipline and moral austerity, turns towards the fine arts and voluptuousness, declines, deteriorates beneath foreign dominion, takes life at its easiest, forgetting to think, and satisfied to enjoy. The sociable and levelling Frenchman rallies round his king, who secures for him public peace, external glory, the splendid display of a sumptuous court, a regular administration, a uniform discipline, European predominance, and universal literature. So, if you regard the Englishman in the sixteenth century, you will find in him the inclinations and the powers which for three centuries are to govern his culture and shape his constitution. In this European expansion of natural existence and pagan literature we find at first in Shakspeare, Jonson, and the tragic poets, in Spenser, Sidney, and the lyric poets, the national features, all with incomparable depth and splendour, and such as race and history have impressed and implanted on them for a thousand years. Not in vain did invasion settle here so serious a race, capable of reflection. Not in vain the Conquest turned this race toward warlike life and practical preoccupations. From the first rise of original invention, its work displays the tragic energy, the intense and shapeless passion, the disdain of regularity, the knowledge of the real, the sentiment of inner things, the natural melancholy, the anxious divination of the obscure beyond,—all the instincts which, forcing man upon himself, and concentrating him within himself, prepare him for Protestantism and combat. What is this Protestantism which is being founded? What is this ideal model which it presents; and what original conception is to furnish to this people its permanent and dominant poem? The harshest and most

[1] See the *Travels of Madame d'Aulnay in Spain*, at the end of the seventeenth century. Nothing is more striking than this revolution, if we compare it with the times before Ferdinand the Catholic, namely, the reign of Henry IV., the great power of the nobles, and the independence of the towns. See about all this history, Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, 1867, 3 vols., ii. ch. viii.

practical of all,—that of the Puritans, which, neglecting speculation, falls back upon action, binds human life in a rigid discipline, imposes on the soul continuous effort, prescribes to society a cloistral austerity, forbids pleasure, commands action, exacts sacrifice, and forms the moralist, the labourer, the citizen. Thus is it implanted, the great English idea—I mean the conviction that man is before all a free and moral personage, and that, having conceived alone in his conscience and before God the rule of his conduct, he must employ himself completely in applying it within himself, beyond himself, obstinately, inflexibly, by a perpetual resistance opposed to others, and a perpetual restraint imposed upon himself. In vain will it at first discredit itself by its transports and its tyranny; attenuated by the trial, it will gradually accommodate itself to humanity, and, carried from Puritan fanaticism to laic morality, it will win all public sympathy, because it answers to all the national instincts. In vain it will vanish from high society, under the scorn of the Restoration, and the importation of French culture; it subsists underground. For French culture did not come to a head: on this too alien soil it produced only sickly, coarse, or imperfect fruit. Fine elegance became low debauchery; moderate doubt became brutal atheism; tragedy failed, and was but declamation; comedy grew shameless, and was but a school of vice; of this literature, there endured only the studies of close reasoning and good style; it was driven from the public stage, together with the Stuarts, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and liberal and moral maxims resumed the ascendency, which they will not again lose. For, with ideas, events have followed their course: national inclinations have done their work in society as in literature; and the English instincts have transformed the constitution and politics at the same time as the talents and minds. These rich tithings, these valiant yeomen, these rude, well-armed citizens, well nourished, protected by their juries, wont to reckon on themselves, obstinate, combative, sensible, such as the English Middle-age bequeathed them to modern England, were able to suffer the king to display above them his temporary tyranny, and weigh down the nobility with the rigour of a despot, which the recollection of the Civil War and the danger of high treason justified. But Henry VIII., and Elizabeth herself, must follow in great interests the current of public opinion: if they were strong, it was because they were popular; the people only supported their designs, and authorised their violences, because they found in them defenders of their religion, and protectors of their labour.[1] The people themselves immersed themselves in this religion, and, beyond the legal establishment, attained to personal belief. They grew rich by toil, and under the first Stuart already occupied the highest place in the nation. At this moment all was decided: be events what they might, they must

[1] Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, i. ch. vii.

one day become master. Social situations create political situations; legal constitutions always accommodate themselves to real things; and acquired preponderance infallibly results in written rights. Men so numerous, so active, so resolute, so capable of sufficing for themselves, so disposed to draw their opinions from their own reflection, and their subsistence from their own efforts, will end at all hazards in seizing the guarantees which they need. At the first onset, and in the heat of primitive faith, they overturn the throne, and the current which bears them is so strong, that, in spite of their excess and their failure, the Revolution is accomplished by the abolition of feudal tenures, and the institution of *Habeas Corpus*, under Charles II.; by the universal restoration of the liberal and Protestant spirit, under James II.; by the establishment of the constitution, the act of toleration, the liberation of the press, under William III. From that moment England had found her proper place; her two interior and hereditary forces—moral and religious instinct, practical and political aptitude—had done their work, and were thenceforth to build, without impediment or destruction, on the foundation which they had laid.

III.

Thus was the literature of the eighteenth century born, altogether conservative, useful, moral, and limited. Two powers direct it, one European, the other English: on one side the talent of oratorical analysis and the habits of literary dignity, which are proper to the classical age; on the other, the relish of application and energy of precise observation, which are proper to the national mind. Hence that excellence and originality of political satire, parliamentary discourse, solid energy, moral novels, and all the kinds of literature which demand an attentive good sense, a correct good style, and a talent for advising, convincing, or wounding others. Hence that weakness or impotence of speculative thought, of genuine poetry, of original drama, and of all the kinds which require a wide, free curiosity, or a wide, disinterested imagination. The English did not attain complete elegance, nor superior philosophy; they dulled the French refinements which they copied, and were terrified by the French boldness which they suggested; they remained half cockneys and half barbarians; they only invented insular ideas and English ameliorations, and were confirmed in their respect for their constitution and their tradition. But, at the same time, they were cultivated and reformed: their wealth and comfort increased enormously; literature and opinion became with them severe even to intolerance; and their long war against the French Revolution pushed to excess the rigour of their morality, at the same time as the invention of machinery developed a hundredfold their comfort and prosperity. A salutary and despotic code of approved maxims, established proprieties, and unassailable beliefs, which fortifies

strengthens, curbs, and employs man usefully and painfully, without permitting him even to deviate or grow weak; a minute apparatus, and an admirable provision of commodious inventions, associations, institutions, mechanisms, implements, methods, which incessantly co-operate to furnish body and mind with all which they need,—such are thenceforth the leading and special features of this people. To constrain themselves and to provide for themselves, to assume self-command and command of nature, to consider life as moralists and economists, like a close garment, in which people must walk becomingly, and like a good garment, the best to be had, to be at once respectable and comfortable: these two words embrace all the springs of human actions. Against this limited good sense, and this pedantic austerity, a revolt breaks out. With the universal renewal of thought and imagination, the deep poetic source, which had flowed in the sixteenth century, expands anew in the nineteenth, and a new literature springs to light; philosophy and history infiltrate their doctrines in the old establishment; the greatest poet of the time shocks it incessantly with his curses and sarcasms; from all sides, to this day, in science and letters, in practice and theory, in private and in public life, the most powerful minds endeavour to open a new door to the stream of continental ideas. But they are patriots as well as innovators, conservative as well as revolutionary; if they touch religion and constitution, manners and doctrines, it is to widen, not to destroy them: England is made; she knows it, and they know it. Such as this country is, based on the whole national history and on the whole national instincts, it is more capable than any other people in Europe of transforming itself without recasting, and of devoting itself to its future without renouncing its past.

§ 2.

I.

I began to perceive these ideas when I first landed in England, and I was singularly struck with the mutual confirmations afforded by observation and history; it seemed to me that the present was completing the past, and the past explained the present.

At first the sea troubles and strikes a man with wonder; not in vain is a people insular and oceanic, especially with this sea and these coasts; their painters, so ill endowed, perceive, in spite of all, its alarming and gloomy aspect; up to the eighteenth century, amidst the elegance of French culture, and under the joviality of Flemish tradition, you will find in Gainsborough the ineffaceable stamp of this great sentiment. In pleasant moments, in the fine calm summer days, the moist fog stretches over the horizon its greyish veil; the sea has the colour of a pale slate; and the ships, spreading their canvas, ad-

vance patiently through the mist. But look around you, and you will soon see the signs of daily peril. The coast is eaten out, the waves have encroached, the trees have vanished, the earth is softened by incessant showers, the ocean is here, ever intractable and fierce. It growls and bellows eternally, that old hoarse monster; and the barking pack of its waves advance like an endless army, before which all human force must give way. Think of the winter months, the storms, the long hours of the tempest-tossed sailor, whirled about blindly by the squalls! Now, and in this fine season, over the whole circle of the horizon, rise the gloomy, wan, clouds, like the smoke of a coal-fire, some of a frail and dazzling white, so swollen that they seem ready to burst. Their heavy masses creep slowly along; they are gorged, and already here and there on the limitless plain a patch of sky is shrouded in a sudden shower. After an instant, the sea becomes dirty and cadaverous; its waves leap with strange gambollings, and their sides take an oily and livid tint. The vast grey dome has drowned and hidden the whole horizon; the rain falls, close and pitiless. You cannot have an idea of it, until you have seen it. When the southern men, the Romans, came here for the first time, they must have thought themselves in hell. The wide space stretching between earth and sky, and on which our eyes dwell as their domain, suddenly fails; there is no more air, we see but a flowing mist. No more colours or forms. In this yellowish smoke, objects look like fading ghosts; nature seems a bad crayon-drawing, over which a child has awkwardly smeared his sleeve. Here you are at Newhaven, then at London; the sky disgorges rain, the earth returns her mist, the mist floats in the rain; all is swamped: looking round you, you see no reason why it should ever end. Here, truly, is Homer's Cimmerian land: your feet splash, you have no use left for your eyes; you feel all your organs stopped up, rusted by the mounting damp; you think yourself banished from the breathing world, reduced to the condition of marshy beings dwelling in dirty pools: to live here is not life. You ask yourself if this vast town is not a cemetery, in which dabble busy and wretched ghosts. Amidst the deluge of moist soot, the muddy stream with its unwearying iron ships, black insects which take and land shades, makes you think of the Styx. There being no more daylight, they create it. Lately, in a large square in London, in the finest hotel, for five days at a time, it was necessary to leave the gas alight. Melancholy besets you; you are disgusted with others and with yourself. What can they do in this sepulchre? To remain here without working is to gnaw one's vitals, and end in suicide. To go out is to make an effort, to be above damp and cold, to brave discomfort and unpleasant sensations. Such a climate prescribes action, forbids sloth, develops energy, teaches patience. I was looking just now at the sailors at the helm,—their tarpaulins, their great streaming boots, their sou'-westers, so attentive, so precise in their movements, so grave, so self-contained. I have since

seen workmen at their cotton looms,—calm, grave, silent, economising their effort, and persevering all day, all the year, all their life, in the same regular and monotonous struggle of body and mind: their soul is suited to their climate. In fact, it must be so in order to live: after a week, we feel that here a man must renounce refined and heartfelt enjoyment, the happiness of careless life, the easy and harmonious expansion of artistic and animal nature; that here he must marry, bring up a house-full of children, assume the cares and importance of a family man, grow rich, provide against the evil day, surround himself with comfort, become a Protestant, a manufacturer, a politician; in short, capable of activity and resistance; and in all the ways open to men, endure and strive.

Yet here there are charming and always touching beauties—those, to wit, of a well-watered land. When, on a partly clear day, we take a drive into the country and reach an eminence, our eyes experience a unique sensation, and a pleasure hitherto unknown. In the far distance, at the four corners of the horizon, in the fields, on the hills, spreads the cool verdure, plants for fodder and food, clover, hops; lovely meadows overflowing with high thick grass; here and there a grove of lofty trees; pasture lands hemmed in with hedges, in which the heavy cows feed on their knees in peace. The mist rises insensibly between the trees, and the prospect swims in a luminous vapour. There is nothing sweeter in the world, nor more delicate, than these tints; we might pause for hours together gazing on these pearly clouds, this fine aerial down, this soft transparent gauze which imprisons the rays of the sun, dulls them, and lets them reach the ground only to smile on it and caress it. On both sides of our carriage pass incessantly meadows each more lovely than the last, in which buttercups, meadow-sweet, Easter-daisies, are crowded in succession with their dissolving hues; a sweetness almost painful, a strange charm, breathes from this inexhaustible and transient vegetation. It is too fresh, it cannot last; nothing here is staid, stable, and firm, as in the South; all is fleeting, in the stage of birth or death, hovering betwixt tears and joy. The rolling water-drops shine on the leaves like pearls; the round tree-tops, the widespread foliage whispers in the feeble breeze, and the sound of the falling tears left by the last shower never ceases. How well these plants thrive in the glades, spread out wantonly, ever renewed and watered by the moist air! How the sap mounts in these plants, refreshed and sheltered against the rays of the sun! And how sky and land seem made to cherish their tissue and refresh their hues! At the least glimpse of sun they smile with delicious charm; you would call them frail and timid virgins under a veil about to be raised. Let the sun for an instant emerge, and you will see them grow resplendent as in a ball dress. The light falls in dazzling sheets; the lustrous golden petals shine with a too vivid colour; the most splendid embroideries, velvet starred with diamonds, sparkling silk seamed with pearls, are not to be compared to this deep hue; joy overflows

like a brimming cup. In the strangeness, the rarity of this spectacle, we understand for the first time the life of a humid land. The water multiplies and softens the living tissues; plants increase, and have no substance; nourishment abounds, and has no savour; moisture fructifies, but the sun does not fertilise. Much grass, much cattle, much meat; large quantities of coarse food: thus an absorbing and phlegmatic temperament is supported; the human growth, like the animal and vegetable, is powerful, but heavy; man is amply but coarsely framed; the machine is solid, but it rolls slowly on its hinges, and the hinges generally creak and are rusty. When we look at the people nearer, it seems that their various parts are independent, at least that they need time to let sensations pass through them. Their ideas do not at first break out in passions, gestures, actions. As in the Fleming and the German, they dwell first of all in the brain; they expand there, they rest there; man is not shaken by them, he has no trouble in standing still, he is not rapt: he can act wisely, uniformly; for his inner motive power is an idea or a watchword, not an emotion or an attraction. He can bear tedium, or rather he does not weary himself; his ordinary course consists of dull sensations, and the insipid monotony of mechanical life has nothing which need repel him. He is made for it, his nature is suited for it. When a man has all his life eaten turnips, he does not wish for oranges. He will readily resign himself to hear fifteen discourses running on the same subject, demanding twenty consecutive years the same reform, examining statistics, studying moral treatises, keeping Sunday schools, bringing up a dozen children. The piquant, the agreeable, are not a necessity to him. The weakness of his sensitive impulses contributes to the force of his moral impulses. His temperament makes him argumentative; he can get on without policemen; the shocks of man against man do not here end in explosions. He can discuss in the market-place, aloud, religion and politics, hold meetings, form associations, rudely attack men in office, say that the Constitution is violated, predict the ruin of the State: there is no objection to this; his nerves are calm; he will argue without cutting throats; he will not raise revolutions; and perhaps he will obtain a reform. Observe the passers-by in the streets: in three hours you will see all the sensible features of this temperament; light hair, in children almost white; pale eyes, often blue as Wedgwood-ware, red whiskers, a tall figure, the motions of an automaton; and with these other still more striking features, those which strong food and combative life have added to this temperament. Here the enormous guardsman, with rosy complexion, majestic, erect, who twirls a little cane in his hand, displaying his chest, and showing a clear parting between his pomaded hair; there the over-fed stout man, short, sanguine, like an animal fit for the shambles, with his alarmed, astounded, yet sluggish air; a little further the country gentleman, six feet high, stout and tall, like the German who left his forest, with the muzzle and nose of a bull-dog,

disproportionate and straggling whiskers, rolling eyes, apoplectic face: these are the excesses of coarse blood and food; add to which, even in the women, the white front of carnivorous teeth, and the great feet, solidly shod, excellent for walking in the mud. Again, look at the young men in a cricket match or picnic party; doubtless mind does not sparkle in their eyes, but life abounds there: there is something of decision and energy in their whole being; healthy and active, ready for motion, for enterprise, these are the words which rise involuntarily to the lips when we speak of them. Many have the air of fine, slender harriers, sniffing the air, and in full cry. A life passed in the gymnasium or in venturesome deeds is honoured in England; they must move their body, swim, throw the ball, run in the damp meadow, row, breathe in their boats the briny sea vapour, feel on their foreheads the raindrops falling from the oak trees, leap their horses over ditches and gates; the animal instincts are intact. They still relish natural pleasures; precocity has not spoiled them. Nothing can be simpler than the young English girls; amidst many beautiful things, there are few so beautiful girls in the world; slim, strong, self-assured, so fundamentally honest and loyal, so free from coquetry! A man cannot imagine, if he has not seen it, this freshness and innocence; many of them are flowers, expanded flowers; only a morning rose, with its transient and delicious colour, with its petals drenched in dew, can give us an idea of it; it leaves far behind the beauty of the South, and its precise, stable, finished contours, its definitive outlines; here we perceive fragility, delicacy, the continual budding of life; candid eyes, blue as periwinkles, looking at you without thinking of your look. At the least motion of the soul, the blood rushes to these girls' cheeks, necks, shoulders, in waves of purple; you see emotions pass over these transparent complexions, as the colours change in the meadows; and their modesty is so virginal and sincere, that you are tempted to lower your eyes from respect. And yet, natural and frank as they are, they are not languishing or dreamy; they love and endure exercise like their brothers; with flowing locks, at six years they ride on horseback and take long walks. Active life in this country strengthens the phlegmatic temperament, and the heart is kept more simple whilst the body grows healthier. Another observation: far above all these figures one type stands out, the most truly English, the most striking to a foreigner. Post yourself for an hour, early in the morning, at the terminus of a railway, and observe the men above thirty who come to London on business: the features are drawn, the faces pale, the eyes fixed, preoccupied; the mouth open and, as it were, contracted; the man is tired, worn out, and hardened by too much work; he runs without looking round him. His whole existence is directed to a single end; he must incessantly exert himself to the utmost, practise the same exertion, a profitable one; he has become a machine. This is especially visible in workmen; perseverance, obstinacy, resignation, are depicted on their long bony and

dull faces. It is still more visible in women of the lower orders: many are thin, consumptive, their eyes hollow, their nose sharp, their skin streaked with red patches; they have suffered too much, have had too many children, have a worked-out, or oppressed, or submissive, or stoically impassive air; we feel that they have endured much, and can endure still more. Even in the middle or upper class this patience and sad hardening are frequent; we think when we see them of those poor beasts of burden, deformed by the harness, which remain motionless under the rain without thinking of shelter. Verily the battle of life is harsher and more obstinate here than elsewhere; whoever gives way, falls. Beneath the rigour of climate and competition, amidst the strikes of industry, the weak, the improvident perish or are degraded; then comes gin and does its work; thence the long files of wretched women who sell themselves by night in the Strand to pay their rent; thence those shameful quarters of London, Liverpool, all the great towns, those half-naked spectres, gloomy or drunk, who crowd the dram-shops, who fill the streets with their dirty linen, and their tatters hung out on ropes, who lie on a soot-heap, amidst troops of wan children; horrible shoals, whither descend all whom their wounded, idle, or feeble arms could not keep on the surface of the great stream. The chances of life are tragic here, and the punishment of improvidence cruel. We soon understand why, under this obligation to fight and grow hard, fine sensations disappear; why taste is blunted, how man becomes ungraceful and stiff; how discords, exaggerations, mar the costume and the fashion; why movements and forms end by being energetic and discordant, like the motions of a machine. If the man is German by race, temperament, and mind, he has been compelled in process of time to fortify, alter, altogether turn aside his original nature; he is no longer a primitive animal, but a well-trained animal; his body and mind have been transformed by strong nourishment, by corporal exercise, by austere religion, by public morality, by political strife, by perpetuity of effort; he has become of all men the most capable of acting usefully and powerfully in all directions, the most productive and effectual labourer, as his ox has become the best animal for food, his sheep the best for wool, his horse the best for racing.

II.

In fact, there is no greater spectacle than his work; in no age or nation of the earth, I believe, has matter ever been better handled and utilised. Enter London by water, and you will see an accumulation of toil and work which has no equal on this planet. Paris, by comparison, is but an elegant city of pleasure; the Seine, with its quays, a pretty serviceable plaything. Here all is vast. I have seen Marseilles, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, but I had no idea of such a mass. From Greenwich to London the two shores are a continuous wharf: merchandise is always being piled up, sacks hoisted, ships

moored; ever new warehouses for copper, beer, ropework, tar, chemicals. Docks, timber-yards, calking-basins, and dockyards multiply and encroach on each other. On the left there is the iron framework of a church being finished, to be sent to India. The Thames is a mile broad, and is but a populous street of vessels, a winding work-yard. Steamboats, sailing vessels, ascend and descend, come to anchor in groups of two, three, ten, then in long files, then in dense rows; there are five or six thousand of them at anchor. On the right, the docks, like so many intricate, maritime streets, disgorge or store up the vessels. If you get on a height, you see vessels in the distance by hundreds and thousands, fixed as if on the land; their masts in a line, their slender rigging, make a spider-web which girdles the horizon. Yet on the river itself, to the west, we see an inextricable forest of masts, yards, and cables; the ships are unloading, fastened to one another, mingled with chimneys, amongst the pulleys of the storehouses, cranes, capstans, and all the implements of the vast and ceaseless toil. A foggy smoke, penetrated by the sun, wraps them in its russet veil; it is the heavy and smoky air of a great hot-house; soil and man, light and air, all is transformed by work. If you enter one of these docks, the impression will be yet more overwhelming: each resembles a town; always ships, still more ships, in a line, showing their heads; their hollowed sides, their copper chests, like monstrous fishes under their breastplate of scales. When we descend below, we see that this breastplate is fifty feet high; many are of three thousand or four thousand tons. Long clippers of three hundred feet are on the point of sailing for Australia, Ceylon, America. A bridge is raised by machinery; it weighs a hundred tons, and only one man is needed to raise it. Here are the wine stores—there are thirty thousand tuns of port in the cellars; here the place for hides, here for tallow, here for ice. The universe tends to this centre. Like a heart, to which the blood flows, and from which it pours, money, goods, business arrive hither from the four quarters of the globe, and flow thence to all the quarters of the world. And this circulation seems natural, so well is it conducted. The cranes turn noiselessly; the tuns seem to move of themselves; a little car rolls them at once, and without effort; the bales descend by their own weight on the inclined planes, which lead them to their place. Clerks, without flurry, call out the numbers; men push or pull without confusion, calmly husbanding their labour; whilst the cool master, in his black hat, gravely, with spare gestures, and without one word, directs.

Now take rail and go to Glasgow, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, to see their industry. As you advance into the coal country, the air is darkened with smoke; the chimneys, high as obelisks, are crowded by hundreds, and cover the plain as far as you can see; multiplied diagonal lines, lofty buildings, in red monotonous brick, pass before the eyes, like rows of economical and busy beehives. The blast-furnaces flame through the smoke; I counted sixteen in one group.

The refuse of minerals is heaped up like mountains; the engines run like black ants, with monotonous and violent motion, and suddenly we find ourselves swallowed up in a monstrous town. This manufactory has five thousand hands, one mill 300,000 spindles. The Manchester warehouses are Babylonian edifices, a hundred and twenty yards wide and long, in six storeys. In Liverpool there are 5000 ships along the Mersey, which choke one another up; more wait to enter. The docks are six miles long, and the cotton warehouses on the border extend their vast red rampart out of sight. All things here seem built in unmeasured proportions, and as though by colossal arms. You enter a mill; nothing but iron pillars, thick as tree-trunks, cylinders as broad as a man; locomotive shafts like vast oaks, notching machines which send up iron chips, rollers which bend sheet-iron like paste, fly-wheels which become invisible by the swiftness of their revolution. Eight workmen, commanded by a kind of peaceful colossus, pushed into and pulled from the fire a tree of red iron as big as my body. Coal has produced all this growth. England has twice as much coal as the remainder of the world. Add brick, the great schists, which are close to the surface, and the estuaries filled by the sea, so as to make natural ports. Liverpool and Manchester, and about ten towns of 40,000 to 100,000 souls, are springing up like plants in the basin of Lancashire. Glance over the map, and you see the districts shaded with black—Glasgow, Newcastle, Birmingham, Wales, all Ireland, which is one block of coal. The old antediluvian forests, accumulating here their fuel, have stored up the power which moves matter, and the sea furnishes the true road by which matter can be transported. Man himself, mind and body, seems made to profit by these advantages. His muscles are resistive, and his mind can support tedium. He is less subject to weariness and disgust than other men. He works as well in the tenth hour as in the first. No one handles machines better; he has their regularity and precision. Two workmen in a cotton-mill do the work of three, or even four, French workmen. Look now in the statistics how many leagues of stuffs they fabricate every year, how many millions of tons they export and import, how many tens of millions they produce and consume; add the industrial or commercial states they have founded, or are founding, in America, China, India, Australia; and then, perhaps, reckoning men and value,—considering that their capital is seven or eight times greater than that of France, that their population has doubled in fifty years, that their colonies, wherever the climate is healthy, are becoming new Englands,—you will obtain some notion, very slight, very imperfect, of a work whose magnitude the eyes alone can measure.

There remains yet one of its parts to explore—cultivation. From the railway carriage we see quite enough to understand it: a field with a hedge, then another field with another hedge, and so on; at times vast squares of radishes, all in line, clean, glossy; no forests, here and there only a grove. The country is a great kitchen-garden

—a manufactory of grass and meat. Nothing is left to nature and chance; all is calculated, regulated, arranged to produce and to bring in profits. If you look at the peasants, you find no more genuine peasants; nothing like French peasants,—a sort of fellahs, akin to the soil, mistrustful and uncultivated, separated by a gulf from the citizens. The countryman here is like an artisan; and, in fact, a field is a manufactory, with a farmer for a foreman. Proprietors and farmers, they lavish capital like great contractors. They have drained; they have a rotation of crops; they have produced a cattle, the richest in returns of any in the world; they have introduced steam-engines into cultivation, and into the breeding of cattle; they perfect already perfect stables. The greatest of the aristocracy take a pride in it; many country gentlemen have no other occupation. Prince Albert, near Windsor, had a model farm, and this farm brought in money. A few years ago the papers announced that the Queen had discovered a cure for the turkey-disease. Under this universal effort,[1] the products of agriculture have doubled in fifty years. The English acre receives eight or ten times more manure than the French hectare; though of inferior quality, they have made it produce double. Thirty persons are enough for this work, when in France forty would be required for half thereof. You come upon a farm, even a small one, say of a hundred acres; you find respectable, worthy, well-clad men, who express themselves clearly and sensibly; a large, wholesome, comfortable dwelling—often a little porch, with climbing plants—a well-kept garden, ornamental trees, the inner walls whitewashed yearly, the floors washed weekly—an almost Dutch cleanness; therewith plenty of books—travels, treatises on agriculture, a few volumes of religion or history; first of all, the great family Bible. Even in the poorest cottages we find a few objects of comfort and recreation: a large cast-iron stove, a carpet, nearly always a paper on the walls, one or two moral novels, and always the Bible. The cottage is clean; the habits are orderly; the plates, with their blue pattern, regularly arranged, look well above the shining dresser; the red floor-tiles have been swept; there are no broken or dirty panes; no doors off hinges, shutters unhung, stagnant pools, straggling dunghills, as amongst the French villagers; the little garden is kept free from weeds; frequently roses and honeysuckle round the door; and on Sunday we can see the father, the mother, seated by a well-scrubbed table, with tea and butter, enjoy their *home*, and the order they have established there. In France the peasant on Sunday leaves his hut to visit his *land:* what he aspires to is possession; what Englishmen love is comfort. There is no land in which they demand more in this respect. An Englishman said to me, not very long ago: 'Our great vice is the strong desire we feel for all good and comfortable things. We have too many wants. As soon

[1] Léonce de Lavergne, *Economie rurale en Angleterre, passim.*

as our peasants have a little money, they buy the best sherry and the best clothes, instead of buying a bit of land.'[1]

As we rise to the upper classes, this taste becomes stronger. In the middle ranks a man burdens himself with toil, to give his wife gaudy dresses, and to fill his house with the hundred thousand baubles of quasi-luxury. Higher still, the inventions of comfort are so multiplied that people are bored by them; there are too many newspapers and reviews on your bed-table at night; too many kinds of carpets, washstands, matches, towels in your dressing-room; their refinement is endless; you would think, thrusting your feet in slippers, that twenty generations of inventors were required to bring sole and lining to this degree of perfection. You cannot conceive clubs better furnished with necessaries and superfluities, houses so well provided and managed, pleasure and abundance so cunningly understood, servants so reliable, respectful, speedy. Servants in the last census were 'the most numerous class of Her Majesty's subjects;' in England there are five where in France they have two. When I saw in Hyde Park the rich young ladies, the gentlemen riding and driving, when I reflected on their country houses, their dress, their parks and stables, I said to myself that verily this people is constituted after the heart of economists: I mean, that it is the greatest producer and the greatest consumer in the world; that none is more apt at squeezing out and absorbing the quintessence of things; that it has developed its wants at the same time as its resources; and you involuntarily think of those insects which, after their metamorphosis, are suddenly provided with teeth, feelers, unwearying claws, admirable and terrible instruments, fitted to dig, saw, build, do everything, but furnished also with incessant hunger and four stomachs.

III.

How is the ant-hill governed? As the train advances, you perceive, amidst farms and cultivation, the long wall of a park, the façade of a castle, more generally of some vast ornate mansion, a sort of country town-house, of inferior architecture, Gothic or Italian pretensions, but surrounded by beautiful lawns, large trees scrupulously preserved. Here live the rich *bourgeois;* I am wrong, the word is false—I must say *gentlemen: bourgeois* is a French word, and signifies the lazy rich, who devote themselves to rest, and take no part in public life; here it is quite different; the hundred or hundred and twenty thousand families, who spend thousands and more annually, really govern the country. And this is no government imported, implanted artificially and from

[1] De Foe was of the same opinion, and pretended that economy was not an English virtue, and that an Englishman can hardly live with twenty shillings a week, while a Dutchman with the same money becomes wealthy, and leaves his children very well off. An English labourer lives poor and wretchedly with nine shillings a week, whilst a Dutchman lives very comfortably with the same salary.

without; it is a spontaneous and natural government. As soon as men wish to act together, they need leaders; every association, voluntary or not, has one; whatever it be, state, army, ship, or commonalty, it cannot do without a guide to find the road, enter it, call the rest, scold the laggards. In vain we call ourselves independent; as soon as we march in a body, we need a leader; we look right and left expecting him to show himself. The great thing is to pick him out, to have the best, and not to follow another in his stead; it is a great advantage that there should be one, and that we should acknowledge him. These men, without popular election, or selection from above, find him ready made and recognised in the influential landholder, an old county man, powerful through his connections, dependants, tenantry, interested above all else by his great possessions in the affairs of the neighbourhood, expert in the concerns which his family have managed for three generations, most fitted by education to give good advice, and by his influence to lead the common enterprise to a good result. In fact, it is thus that things falls out; rich men leave London by hundreds every day to spend a day in the country; there is a meeting on the affairs of the county or of the church; they are magistrates, overseers, presidents of all kinds of societies, and this gratuitously. One has built a bridge at his own expense, another a church or a school; many establish public libraries, with warmed and lighted rooms, in which the villagers in the evening find the papers, games, tea, at low charges,—in a word, simple amusements which may keep them from the gin-shop. Many of them give lectures; their sisters or daughters teach in Sunday schools; in fact, they give to the ignorant and poor, at their own expense, justice, administration, civilisation. I have seen one, having an enormous fortune, who on Sunday in his school taught singing to little girls. Lord Palmerston offered his park for archery meetings; the Duke of Marlborough opens his daily to the public, 'requesting (this is the word used) the public not to destroy the grass.' A firm and proud sentiment of duty, a genuine public spirit, a liberal notion of what a gentleman owes to himself, gives them a moral superiority which sanctions their command; probably from the time of the old Greek cities, no education or condition has been seen in which the innate nobility of man has received a more wholesome or completer development. In short, they are magistrates and patrons from their birth, leaders of the great enterprises in which capital is risked, promoters of all charities, all improvements, all reforms, and with the honours of command they accept its burdens. For observe, in contrast with other aristocracies, they are well educated, liberal, and march in the van, not at the tail of public civilisation. They are not drawing-room exquisites, as our marquises of the eighteenth century: a lord visits his fisheries, studies the system of liquid manures, speaks to the purpose about cheese; and his son is often a better rower, walker, and boxer than the farmers. They are not malcontents, like the French

nobility, behind their age, devoted to whist, and regretting the middle-ages. They have travelled through Europe, and often farther; they know languages and literature; their daughters read Schiller, Manzoni, and Lamartine with ease. By means of reviews, newspapers, innumerable volumes of geography, statistics, and travels, they have the world at their finger-ends. They support and preside over scientific societies; if the free inquirers of Oxford, amidst conventional rigour, have been able to give their explanations of the Bible, it is because they knew themselves to be backed by enlightened laymen of the highest rank. There is also no danger that this aristocracy of talent should become a set; it renews itself; a great physician, a profound lawyer, an illustrious general, become ennobled and found families. When a manufacturer or merchant has gained a large fortune, he first thinks of acquiring an estate; after two or three generations his family has taken root, and shares in the government of the country: in this way the best saplings of the great popular forest come to recruit the aristocratic nursery. Mark, in the last place, that the institution is not isolated. Throughout there are leaders recognised, respected, followed with confidence and deference, who feel their responsibility, and carry the burden as well as the advantages of the dignity. There is such an institution in marriage, by which the man incontestably rules, followed by his wife to the end of the world, faithfully waited for in the evenings, unshackled in his business, of which he does not speak. There is such in the family, when the father[1] can disinherit his children, and keeps up with them, in the most petty circumstances of daily life, a degree of authority and dignity unknown in France: if in England a son, through ill-health, has been away for some time from his home, he dare not come into the county to see his father without leave; a servant to whom I gave my card refused to take it, saying, 'Oh! I dare not now. Master is dining.' There is respect in all ranks, in the workshops as in the fields, in the army as in the family. Throughout there are inferiors and superiors who feel themselves so; if the mechanism of established power were thrown out of gear, we should behold it reconstructed of itself; below the legal constitution is the social, and human action is forced into a solid mould prepared for it.

It is because this aristocratic network is strong that human action can be free; for local and natural government being rooted throughout, like ivy, by a hundred small, ever-growing fibres, the sudden movements, violent as they are, are not capable of pulling it up altogether. In vain men speak, cry out, call meetings, hold processions, form leagues: they will not demolish the state; they have not to deal with a set of functionaries who have no real hold on the country, and who, like all external applications, can be replaced by another set: the thirty or

[1] In familiar language, the father is called in England the governor; in France, *le banquier*.

forty gentlemen of a district, rich, influential, trusted, useful as they are, will become the leaders of the district. 'As we see in the papers,' says Montesquieu, speaking of England, 'that they are playing the devil, we fancy that the people will revolt to-morrow.' Not at all, it is their way of speaking; they only talk loudly and rudely. Two days after I arrived in London, I saw advertising men walking with a placard on their backs and their stomachs, bearing these words: 'Great usurpation! Outrage of the Lords, in their vote on the budget, against the rights of the people.' But then the placard added, 'Fellow-countrymen, petition!' Things end thus; they argue in free terms, and if the reasoning is good it will spread. Another time in Hyde Park, orators were declaiming in the open air against the Lords, who were called rogues. The audience applauded or hissed, as it pleased them. 'After all,' said an Englishman to me, 'this is how we manage our business. With us, when a man has an idea, he writes it; a dozen men think it good, and then all contribute money to publish it; this creates a little association, which grows, prints cheap pamphlets, gives lectures, then petitions, calls forth public opinion, and at last takes the matter into Parliament; Parliament refuses or delays it; yet the matter gains weight: the majority of the nation pushes, forces open the doors, and then you'll have a law passed.' It is open to every one to do this; workmen can league against their masters; in fact, their associations embrace all England; at Preston I believe there was once a strike which lasted more than six months. They will sometimes mob, but never revolt; they know political economy by this time, and understand that to do violence to capital is to suppress work. Above all, they are cool; here, as elsewhere, temperament has great influence. Anger, blood does not rise at once to their eyes, as in the southern nations; a long interval always separates idea from action, and wise arguments, repeated calculations, occupy the interval. Go to a meeting, consider men of every condition, the ladies who come for the thirtieth time to hear the same speech, full of figures, on education, cotton, wages. They do not seem to be wearied; they can bring argument against argument, be patient, protest gravely, recommence their protest; they are the same people who wait for the train on the platform, without getting crushed, and who play cricket for a couple of hours without raising their voices or quarrelling for an instant. Two coachmen, who run into one another, set themselves free without storming or scolding. Thus their political association endures; they can be free because they have natural leaders and patient nerves. After all, the state is a machine like other machines; try to have good wheels, and take care you don't break them; Englishmen have the double advantage of possessing very good ones, and of managing them coolly.

IV.

Such is our Englishman, with his provision and his administration.

Now that he has provided for private comfort and public security, what will he do, and how will he govern himself in this higher, nobler domain, to which man climbs to contemplate beauty and truth? At all events, the arts do not lead him there. That vast London is monumental; but, like the castle of a man who has become rich, everything there is well preserved and costly, but nothing more. Those lofty houses of massive stone, burdened with porches, short columns, Greek decorations, are generally gloomy; the poor columns of the monuments seem washed with ink. On Sunday, in foggy weather, you would think yourself in a cemetery; the perfect readable names on the houses, in brass letters, are like sepulchral inscriptions. There is nothing beautiful: at most, the varnished middle-class houses, with their patch of green, are pleasant; we feel that they are well kept, commodious, capital for a business man who wants to amuse himself and unbend after a hard day's work. But a finer and higher sentiment could relish nothing there. As to the statues, it is difficult not to laugh at them. You should see the Duke of Wellington, with his cocked hat with iron plumes; Nelson, with a cable which serves him for a tail, planted on his column, and pierced by a lightning-conductor, like a rat impaled on the end of a pole; or again, the half-dressed Waterloo Generals, crowned by Victory. The English, though flesh and bone, seem manufactured out of sheet-iron: how much more so will English statues look? They pride themselves on their painting; at least they study it with surprising minuteness, in the Chinese fashion; they can paint a bottle of hay so exactly, that a botanist will tell the species of every stalk; one artist lived three months under canvas on a heath, so that he might thoroughly know heath. Many are excellent observers, especially of moral expression, and succeed very well in showing you the soul in the face; we are instructed by looking at them; we go through a course of psychology with them; they can illustrate a novel; you would be touched by the poetic and dreamy meaning of many of their landscapes. But in genuine painting, picturesque painting, they are revolting. I do not think there were ever laid upon canvas such crude colours, such stiff forms, stuffs so much like tin, such glaring contrasts. Fancy an opera with nothing but false notes in it. You may see landscapes painted blood-red, trees which split the canvas, turf which looks like a pot of overturned green, Christs looking as if they were baked and preserved in oil, expressive stags, sentimental dogs, undressed women, to whom we should like forthwith to offer a garment. In music, they import the Italian opera; it is an orange tree kept up at great cost in the midst of beetroots. The arts require idle, delicate minds, not stoics, especially not puritans, easily shocked by dissonance, inclined to sensuous pleasure, employing their long periods of leisure, their free reveries, in harmoniously arranging, and with no other object but enjoyment, forms, colours, and sounds. I need not say that here the bent of mind is quite opposite; and we see clearly

enough why, amidst these combative politicians, these laborious toilers, these men of energetic action, art can but produce exotic or ill-shaped fruit.

Not so in science; but in science there are two divisions. It may be treated as a business, to glean and verify observations, to combine experiences, to arrange figures, to weigh probabilities, to discover facts, partial laws, to possess laboratories, libraries, societies charged with storing and increasing positive knowledge; in all this Englishmen excel. They have even Lyells, Darwins, Owens, able to embrace and renew a science; in the construction of the vast edifice, the industrious masons, masters of the second rank, are not lacking; it is the great architects, the thinkers, the genuine speculative minds, who fail them; philosophy, especially metaphysics, is as little indigenous here as music and painting; they import it, and yet they leave the best part on the road. Carlyle was obliged to transform it into a mystical poetry, humorous and prophetic fancies; Hamilton touched upon it only, to declare it chimerical; Stuart Mill, Buckle, only seized the most palpable part,—a heavy residuum, positivism. It is not in metaphysics that the English mind can find its vent. It is on other objects that the spirit of liberal inquiry—the sublime instincts of the mind, the craving for the universal and the infinite, the desire of ideal and perfect things—will fall back. Let us take the day on which the hush of business leaves a free field for disinterested aspirations. There is no more striking spectacle for a foreigner than Sunday in London. The streets are empty, and the churches full. An Act of Parliament forbids any playing to-day, public or private; the public-houses are not allowed to harbour people during divine service. Moreover, all respectable people are at worship, the seats are full: it is not as in France, where there are none but servants, old women, a few sleepy people, of private means, and a sprinkling of elegant ladies; but in England we see men well dressed, or at least decently clad, and as many gentlemen as ladies in church. Religion does not remain out of the pale, and below the standard of public culture; the young, the learned, the best of the nation, all the upper and middle classes, continue attached to it. The clergyman, even in a village, is not a peasant's son, with not much polish, fresh from college, shackled in a cloistral education, separated from society by celibacy, half-buried in mediævalism. He is a man of the times, often a man of the world, often of good family, with the interests, habits, liberties of other men; keeping sometimes a carriage, several servants, having elegant manners, generally well informed, who has read and still reads. On all these grounds he is able to be in his neighbourhood the leader of ideas, as his neighbour the squire is the leader of business. If he does not walk in the same path as the free-thinkers, he is not more than a step or two behind them; a modern man, a Parisian, can talk with him on all lofty themes, and not perceive a gulf between his own mind and the clergyman's. Strictly speaking, he is a layman like you; the only

difference is, that he is a superintendent of morality. Even in his externals, except for occasional bands and the perpetual white tie, he is like you: at first sight, you would take him for a professor, a magistrate, or a notary; and his sermons agree with his person. He does not anathematise the world; in this his doctrine is modern; he follows the broad path in which the Renaissance and the Reformation have impelled religion. When Christianity arose, eighteen centuries ago, it was in the East, in the land of the Essenes and Therapeutists, amid universal decay and despair, when the only deliverance seemed a renunciation of the world, an abandonment of civil life, destruction of the natural instincts, and a daily waiting for the kingdom of God. When it rose again, three centuries ago, it was in the West, amongst laborious and half-free peoples, amidst universal restoration and invention, when man, improving his condition, regained confidence in his worldly destiny, and widely expanded his faculties. No wonder if the new Protestantism differs from the ancient Christianity, if it enjoins action instead of preaching asceticism, if it authorises comforts in place of prescribing mortification, if it honours marriage, work, patriotism, inquiry, science, all natural affections and faculties, in place of praising celibacy, retreat, scorn of the age, ecstasy, captivity of mind, and mutilation of the heart. By this infusion of the modern spirit, Christianity has received new blood, and Protestantism now constitutes, with science, the two motive organs, and, as it were, the double heart of European life. For, in accepting the rehabilitation of the world, it has not renounced the purification of man's heart; on the contrary, it is towards this that it has directed its whole effort. It has cut off from religion all the portions which are not this very purification, and, by reducing it, has strengthened it. An institution, like a machine, and like a man, is the more powerful for being more special: a work is done better because it is done singly, and because we concentrate ourselves upon it. By the suppression of legends and religious practices, human thought in its entirety has been concentrated on a single object—moral amelioration. It is of this men speak in the churches, gravely and coldly, with a succession of sensible and solid arguments; how a man ought to reflect on his duties, mark them one by one in his mind, make for himself principles, have a sort of inner code, freely accepted and firmly established, to which he may refer all his actions without bias or hesitation; how these principles may be rooted by practice; how unceasing examination, personal effort, the continual edification of himself by himself, ought slowly to confirm our resolution in uprightness. These are the questions which, with a multitude of examples, proofs, appeals to daily experience,[1] are brought forward in all the pulpits, to develop in man a voluntary reformation, a guard and empire over himself, the habit of self-restraint, and a kind of modern

[1] Let the reader, amongst many others, peruse the sermons of Dr. Arnold, delivered in the School Chapel at Rugby.

stoicism, almost as noble as the ancient. On all hands laymen help in this; and moral warning, given by literature as well as by theology, unites in harmony, society, and the clergy. Hardly ever does a book paint a man in a disinterested manner: critics, philosophers, historians, novelists, poets even, give a lesson, maintain a theory, unmask or punish a vice, represent a temptation overcome, relate the history of a character becoming formed. Their exact and minute description of sentiments ends always in approbation or blame; they are not artists, but moralists: it is only in a Protestant country that you will find a novel entirely occupied in describing the progress of moral sentiment in a child of twelve.[1] All co-operate in this direction in religion, and even in the mystic part of it. Byzantine distinctions and subtleties have been allowed to fall away; Germanic curiosities and speculations have not been introduced; the God of conscience reigns alone; feminine sweetness has been cut off; we do not find the husband of souls, the lovable consoler, whom the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* follows even in his tender dreams; something manly breathes from religion in England; we find that the Old Testament, the severe Hebrew Psalms, have left their imprint here. It is no longer an intimate friend to whom a man confides his petty desires, his small troubles, a sort of affectionate and quite human priestly guide; it is no longer a king whose relations and courtiers he tries to gain over, and from whom he looks for favours or places; we see in him only a guardian of duty, and we speak to him of nothing else. What we ask of him is the strength to be virtuous, the inner renewal by which we become capable of always doing good; and such a prayer is in itself a sufficient lever to tear a man from his weaknesses. What we know of the Deity is that he is perfectly just; and such a reliance suffices to represent all the events of life as an approach to the reign of justice. Strictly speaking, justice alone exists; the world is a figure which conceals it, but heart and conscience sustain it, and there is nothing important or true in man but the embrace by which he holds it. So speak the old grave prayers, the severe hymns which are sung in the church, accompanied by the organ. Though a Frenchman, and brought up in a different religion, I heard them with sincere admiration and emotion. Serious and grand poems, which, opening a path to the Infinite, let a ray of light into the limitless darkness, and satisfy the deep poetic instincts, the vague desire of sublimity and melancholy, which this race has manifested from its origin, and which it has preserved to the end.

V.

At the basis of the present as of the past ever reappears an inner and persistent cause, the *character* of the race; transmission and climate have maintained it; a violent perturbation—the Norman Conquest—

[1] *The Wide, Wide World*, by Elizabeth Wetherell (an American book). See also the novels of Miss Yonge, and, above all, those of George Eliot.

warped it; finally, after various oscillations, it was manifested by the conception of a special ideal, which gradually fashioned or produced religion, literature, institutions. Thus fixed and expressed, it was thenceforth the mover of the rest; it explains the present, on it depends the future; its force and direction will produce the present and future civilisation. Now that great historic violences—I mean the destructions and enslavements of peoples—have become almost impracticable, each nation can develop its life according to its own conception of life; the chances of a war, a discovery, have no hold but on details; national inclinations and aptitudes alone now draw the great features of a national history; when twenty-five million men conceive the good and useful after a certain type, they will seek and end by attaining this kind of the good and useful. The Englishman has henceforth his priest, his gentleman, his manufacture, his comfort, and his novel. If you wish to seek in what sense this work will alter, you must seek in what sense the central conception will alter. A vast revolution has taken place during the last three centuries in human intelligence,—like those regular and vast uprisings which, displacing a continent, displace all the prospects. We know that positive discoveries go on increasing day by day, that they will increase daily more and more, that from object to object they reach the most lofty, that they begin by renewing the science of man, that their useful application and their philosophical consequences are ceaselessly unfolded; in short, that their universal encroachment will at last comprise the whole human mind. From this body of invading truths springs in addition an original conception of the good and the useful, and, moreover, a new idea of state and church, art and industry, philosophy and religion. This has its power, as the old idea had; it is scientific, if the other was national; it is supported on proved facts, if the other was upon established things. Already their opposition is being manifested; already their results begin; and we may affirm beforehand, that the proximate condition of English civilisation will depend upon their divergence and their agreement.

BOOK V.

MODERN AUTHORS.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The translator thinks it due to M. Taine to state, that the fifth book, on the *Modern Authors*, was written whilst Dickens, Thackeray, and Macaulay were still alive. He also gives the original preface of that book:—

'This fifth book is the sequel to the *History of English Literature;* it is written on another plan, because the subject is different. The present period is not yet completed, and the ideas which govern it are in process of formation, that is, in the rough. We cannot therefore as yet systematically arrange them. When documents are still mere indications, history is necessarily reduced to studies; science is moulded on existence; and our conclusions cannot be other than incomplete, so long as the facts which suggest them are unfinished. Fifty years hence the history of this age may be written; in the meantime we can but sketch it. I have selected from contemporary English writers the most original minds, the most consistent, and the most contrasted; they may be regarded as specimens, representing the common features, the opposite tendencies, and consequently the general direction of the public mind.

'They are only specimens. By the side of Macaulay and Carlyle we have historians like Hallam, Buckle, and Grote; by the side of Dickens, novel-writers like Bulwer, Charlotte Bronte, Mrs. Gaskell, George Eliot, and many more; by the side of Tennyson, poets like Elizabeth Browning; by the side of Stuart Mill, philosophers like Hamilton, Bain, and Herbert Spencer. I pass over the vast number of men of talent who write anonymously in reviews, and who, like soldiers in an army, display at times more clearly than their generals the faculties and inclinations of their time and their country. If we look for the common marks in this multitude of varied minds, we shall, I think, find the two salient features which I have already pointed out. One of these features is proper to English civilisation, the other to the civilisation of the nineteenth century. The one is national, the other European. On the one hand, special to this people, their literature is an inquiry instituted into humanity, altogether positive, and consequently only partially beautiful or philosophical, but very exact, minute, useful, and moreover very moral; and this to such a degree, that sometimes the generosity or purity of its aspirations raises it to a height which no artist or philosopher has transcended. On the other hand, in common with the various peoples of our age, this literature subordinates dominant creeds and institutions to private inquiry and established science—I mean, to that irresponsible tribunal which is erected in each man's individual conscience, and to that universal authority which the diverse human judgments, mutually rectified, and controlled by practice, borrow from the verifications of experience, and from their own harmony.

'Whatever be the judgment passed on these tendencies and on these doctrines, we cannot, I think, refuse them the merit of spontaneity and originality. They are living and thriving plants. The six writers, described in this volume, have

expressed efficacious and complete ideas on God, nature, man, science, religion, art, and morality. To produce such ideas we have in Europe at this day but three nations—England, Germany, and France. Those of England will here be found arranged, discussed, and compared with those of the other two thinking countries.'

CHAPTER I.

The Novel:—Dickens.

§ 1.—The Author.

I. Connection of the different elements of a talent—Importance of the imaginative faculty.

II. Lucidity and intensity of imagination in Dickens—Boldness and vehemence of his fancy—How with him inanimate objects are personified and impassioned—Wherein his conception is akin to intuition—How he describes idiots and madmen.

III. The objects to which he directs his enthusiasm—His trivialities and minuteness—Wherein he resembles the painters of his country—Wherein he differs from George Sand—*Miss Ruth* and *Geneviève*—A journey in a coach.

IV. Vehemence of the emotions which this kind of imagination must produce—His pathos—*Stephen*, the factory hand—His humour—Why he attains to buffoonery and caricature—Recklessness and nervous exaggeration of his gaiety.

§ 2.—The Public.

English novels are compelled to be moral—Wherein this constraint modifies the idea of love—Comparison of love in George Sand and Dickens—Pictures of the young girl and the wife—Wherein this constraint qualifies the idea of passion—Comparison of passions in Balzac and Dickens—Inconvenience of this foregone necessity—How comic or odious masks are substituted for natural characters—Comparison of *Pecksniff* and *Tartuffe*—Why unity of action is absent in Dickens.

§ 3.—The Characters.

I. Two classes of characters—Natural and instinctive characters—Artificial and positive characters—Preference of Dickens for the first—Aversion against the second.

II. The hypocrite—Mr. Pecksniff—Wherein he is English—Comparison of *Pecksniff* and *Tartuffe*—The positive man—Mr. Gradgrind—The proud man—Mr. Dombey—Wherein these characters are English.

III. Children—Wanting in French literature—Little *Joas* and *David Copperfield*—Men of the lower orders.

IV. The ideal man according to Dickens—Wherein this conception corresponds to a public need—Opposition of culture and nature in England—Reassertion of sense and instinct oppressed by conventionalism and rule—Success of Dickens.

WERE Dickens dead, his biography might be written. On the day after the burial of a celebrated man, his friends and enemies apply themselves to the work; his schoolfellows relate in the newspapers his boyish pranks; another man recalls exactly, and word for word, the conversations he had with him a score of years ago. The lawyer, who manages the affairs of the deceased, draws up a list of the different offices he has filled, his titles, dates and figures, and reveals to the matter-of-fact readers how the money left has been invested, and how the fortune has been made; the grandnephews and second cousins publish an account of his acts of humanity, and the catalogue of his domestic virtues. If there is no literary genius in the family, they select an Oxford man, conscientious, learned, who treats the dead like a Greek author, amasses endless documents, involves them in endless comments, crowns the whole with endless discussions, and comes ten years later, some fine Christmas morning, with his white tie and placid smile, to present to the assembled family three quartos, of eight hundred pages, the easy style of which would send a German from Berlin to sleep. He is embraced by them with tears in their eyes; they make him sit down; he is the chief ornament of the festivities; and his work is sent to the *Edinburgh Review*. The latter groans at the sight of the enormous present, and tells off a young and intrepid member of the staff to concoct some kind of a biography from the table of contents. Another advantage of posthumous biographies is, that the dead man is no longer there to refute either biographer or man of learning.

Unfortunately Dickens is still alive, and refutes the biographies made of him. What is worse, he claims to be his own biographer. His translator in French once asked him for a few particulars of his life; Dickens replied that he kept them for himself. Without doubt, *David Copperfield*, his best novel, has much the appearance of a confession; but where does the confession end, and how far does fiction embroider truth? All that is known, or rather all that is told, is that Dickens was born in 1812, that he is the son of a shorthand-writer, that he was himself at first a shorthand-writer, that he was poor and unfortunate in his youth, that his novels, published in parts, have gained for him a great fortune and an immense reputation. The reader may conjecture the rest; Dickens will tell him it one day, when he writes his memoirs. Meanwhile he closes the door, and leaves outside the too inquisitive folk who go on knocking. He has a right to do so. Though a man may be illustrious, he is not on that account public property; he is not constrained to be confidential; he still belongs to himself; he may reserve of himself what he thinks proper. If we give our works to our readers, we do not give our lives. Let us be satisfied with what Dickens has given us. Forty volumes suffice, and more than suffice, to enable us to know a man well; moreover, they show of him all that it is important to know. It is not through the accidental circumstances of his life that he belongs to history, but by his talent; and his talent is in his books.

A man's genius is like a clock; it has its mechanism, and amongst its parts a mainspring. Find out this spring, show how it communicates movement to the others, pursue this movement from part to part down to the hands in which it ends. This inner history of genius does not depend upon the outer history of the man; and it is worth more.

§ 1.—The Author.

I.

The first question which should be asked in connection with an artist is this: How does he regard objects? With what clearness, what energy, what force? The reply defines his whole work beforehand: for in a writer of novels the imagination is the master faculty; the art of composition, good taste, appreciation of truth, depend upon it; one degree more of vehemence destroys the style which expresses it, changes the characters which it produces, breaks the framework in which it is enclosed. Consider that of Dickens, and you will perceive therein the cause of his faults and his merits, his power and his excess.

II.

He has the painter in him, and the English painter. Never surely did a mind figure to itself with more exact detail or greater energy all the parts and tints of a picture. Read this description of a storm; the images seem photographed by a dazzling electric light:

'The eye, partaking of the quickness of the flashing light, saw in its every gleam a multitude of objects which it could not see at steady noon in fifty times that period. Bells in steeples, with the rope and wheel that moved them; ragged nests of birds in cornices and nooks; faces full of consternation in the tilted waggons that came tearing past: their frightened teams ringing out a warning which the thunder drowned; harrows and ploughs left out in fields; miles upon miles of hedge-divided country, with the distant fringe of trees as obvious as the scarecrow in the beanfield close at hand; in a trembling, vivid, flickering instant, everything was clear and plain: then came a flush of red into the yellow light; a change to blue; a brightness so intense that there was nothing else but light; and then the deepest and profoundest darkness.'[1]

An imagination so lucid and energetic cannot but animate inanimate objects without an effort. It provokes in the mind in which it works extraordinary emotions, and the author pours over the objects which he figures to himself, something of the ever-welling passion which overflows in him. Stones for him take a voice, white walls swell out into big phantoms, black wells yawn hideously and mysteriously in the darkness; legions of strange creatures whirl shuddering over the fantastic landscape; blank nature is peopled, inert matter moves. But the images remain clear; in this madness there is nothing vague or

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xlii. The translator has used the 'Charles Dickens' edition, 1868, 18 vols.

disorderly ; imaginary objects are designed with outlines as precise and details as numerous as real objects, and the dream is equal to the truth.

There is, amongst others, a description of the night wind, quaint and powerful, which recalls certain pages of *Notre Dame de Paris*. The source of this description, as of all those of Dickens, is pure imagination. He does not, like Walter Scott, describe in order to give his reader a map, and to lay down the locality of his drama. He does not, like Lord Byron, describe from love of magnificent nature, and in order to display a splendid succession of grand pictures. He dreams neither of attaining exactness nor of selecting beauty. Struck with a certain spectacle, he is transported, and breaks out into unforeseen figures. Now it is the yellow leaves, pursued by the wind, fleeing and jostling, shivering, scared, in a giddy chase, lying in the furrows, drowned in the ditches, perching in the trees.[1] Here it is the night wind, sweeping round a church, moaning as it tries with its unseen hand the windows and the doors, and seeking out some crevices by which to enter :

'And when it has got in ; as one not finding what he seeks, whatever that may be ; it wails and howls to issue forth again : and not content with stalking through the aisles, and gliding round and round the pillars, and tempting the deep organ, soars up to the roof, and strives to rend the rafters : then flings itself despairingly upon the stones below, and passes, muttering, into the vaults. Anon, it comes up stealthily, and creeps along the walls : seeming to read, in whispers, the Inscriptions sacred to the Dead. At some of these, it breaks out shrilly, as with laughter ; and at others, moans and cries as if it were lamenting.'[2]

Hitherto you have only recognised the sombre imagination of a man of the north. A little further you perceive the impassioned religion of a revolutionary Protestant, when he speaks to you of 'a ghostly sound too, lingering within the altar ; where it seems to chaunt, in its

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[1] 'It was small tyranny for a respectable wind to go wreaking its vengeance on such poor creatures as the fallen leaves ; but this wind happening to come up with a great heap of them just after venting its humonr on the insulted Dragon, did so disperse and scatter them that they fled away, pell-mell, some here, some there, rolling over each other, whirling round and round upon their thin edges, taking frantic flights into the air, and playing all manner of extraordinary gambols in the extremity of their distress. Nor was this enough for its malicious fury : for, not content with driving them abroad, it charged small parties of them and hunted them into the wheelwright's saw-pit, and below the planks and timbers in the yard, and, scattering the sawdust in the air, it looked for them underneath, and when it did meet with any, whew ! how it drove them on and followed at their heels !

'The scared leaves only flew the faster for all this, and a giddy chase it was : for they got into unfrequented places, where there was no outlet, and where their pursuer kept them eddying round and round at his pleasure ; and they crept under the eaves of houses, and clung tightly to the sides of hay-ricks, like bats ; and tore in at open chamber windows, and cowered close to hedges ; and, in short, went anywhere for safety.'—(*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. ii.)

[2] *The Chimes*, first quarter.

wild way, of Wrong and Murder done, and false Gods worshipped; in defiance of the Tables of the Law, which look so fair and smooth, but are so flawed and broken. Ugh! Heaven preserve us, sitting snugly round the fire! It has an awful voice, that wind at Midnight, singing in a church!' But an instant after, the artist speaks again; he leads you to the belfry, and in the racket of the accumulated words, communicates to your nerves the sensation of the aerial tempest. The wind whistles, blows, and gambols in the arches:

'High up in the steeple, where it is free to come and go through many an airy arch and loophole, and to twist and twine itself about the giddy stair, and twirl the groaning weathercock, and make the very tower shake and shiver!' [1]

Dickens has seen it all in the old belfry; his thought is a mirror; not the smallest or ugliest detail escapes him. He has counted 'the iron rails ragged with rust;' 'the sheets of lead,' wrinkled and shrivelled, which crackle and heave astonished under the foot which treads them; 'the shabby nests' which 'the birds stuff into corners' of the mossy joists; the gray dust heaped up; 'the speckled spiders, indolent and fat with long security,' which, hanging by a thread, 'swing idly to and fro in the vibration of the bells,' and which on a sudden alarm climb up like sailors on their ropes, or 'drop upon the ground and ply a score of nimble legs to save a life.' This picture captivates us. Kept up at such a height, amongst the fleeting clouds which spread their shadows over the town, and the feeble lights scarce distinguished in the mist, we feel a sort of vertigo; and we hardly fail to discover, with Dickens, thought and a soul in the metallic voice of the chimes which inhabit this trembling castle.

He makes a story out of them, and it is not the first. Dickens is a poet; he is as much at home in the imaginative world as in the actual. Here the chimes are talking to the old messenger, and consoling him. Elsewhere it is the Cricket on the Hearth singing of all domestic joys, and bringing before the eyes of the desolate master the happy evenings, the sanguine hopes, the happiness, the quiet cheerfulness which he has enjoyed, and which he has no longer. In another tale it is the history of a sick and precocious child who feels itself dying, and who, sleeping in the arms of its sister, hears the distant song of the murmuring waves which rocked him to sleep. Objects, with Dickens, take their hue from the thoughts of his characters. His imagination is so lively, that it carries everything with it in the path which it chooses. If the character is happy, the stones, flowers, and clouds must be happy too; if he is sad, nature must weep with him. Even to the ugly houses in the street, all speak. The style runs through a swarm of visions; it breaks out into the strangest oddities. Here is a young girl, pretty and good, who crosses Fountain Court and the low purlieus in search of her brother. What more simple? what even

[1] *The Chimes*, first quarter.

more vulgar? Dickens is carried away by it. To entertain her, he summons up birds, trees, houses, the fountain, the offices, law papers, and much besides. It is a folly, and it is all but an enchantment:

'Whether there was life enough left in the slow vegetation of Fountain Court for the smoky shrubs to have any consciousness of the brightest and purest-hearted little woman in the world, is a question for gardeners, and those who are learned in the loves of plants. But, that it was a good thing for that same paved yard to have such a delicate little figure flitting through it; that it passed like a smile from the grimy old houses, and the worn flagstones, and left them duller, darker, sterner than before; there is no sort of doubt. The Temple fountain might have leaped up twenty feet to greet the spring of hopeful maidenhood, that in her person stole on, sparkling, through the dry and dusty channels of the Law; the chirping sparrows, bred in Temple chinks and crannies, might have held their peace to listen to imaginary sky-larks, as so fresh a little creature passed; the dingy boughs, unused to droop, otherwise than in their puny growth, might have bent down in a kindred gracefulness, to shed their benedictions on her graceful head; old love-letters, shut up in iron boxes in the neighbouring offices, and made of no account among the heaps of family papers into which they had strayed, and of which, in their degeneracy, they formed a part, might have stirred and fluttered with a moment's recollection of their ancient tenderness, as she went lightly by. Anything might have happened that did not happen, and never will, for the love of Ruth.'[1]

This is far-fetched, without doubt. French taste, always measured, revolts against these affected strokes, these sickly prettinesses. And yet this affectation is natural; Dickens does not hunt after quaintnesses; they come to him. His excessive imagination is like a string too tightly stretched; it produces of itself, without any violent shock, sounds not otherwise heard.

We shall see how it is excited. Imagine a shop, no matter what shop, the most repulsive; that of a marine store dealer. Dickens sees the barometers, chronometers, telescopes, compasses, charts, maps, sextants, speaking trumpets, and so forth. He sees so many, sees them so clearly, they are crowded and crammed, they replace each other so forcibly in his brain, which they fill and litter; there are so many geographical and nautical ideas scattered under the glass-cases hung from the ceiling, nailed to the wall, they swamp him from so many sides, and in such abundance, that he loses his judgment. 'The shop itself, partaking of the general infection, seemed almost to become a snug, sea-going, ship-shape concern, wanting only good sea-room, in the event of an unexpected launch, to work its way securely to any desert island in the world.'[2]

The difference between a madman and a man of genius is not very great. Napoleon, who knew men, said so to Esquirol.[3] The same faculty leads us to glory or throws us in a cell in a lunatic asylum. It is visionary imagination which forges the phantoms of the madman

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xlv.
[2] *Dombey and Son*, ch. iv.
[3] See vol. i. note 1, page 340.

and creates the personages of an artist, and the classifications serving for the first may serve for the second. The imagination of Dickens is like that of monomaniacs. To plunge oneself into an idea, to be absorbed by it, to see nothing else, to repeat it under a hundred forms, to enlarge it, to carry it thus enlarged to the eye of the spectator, to dazzle and overwhelm him with it, to stamp it upon him so tenacious and impressive that he can never again tear it from his memory,—these are the great features of this imagination and style. In this, *David Copperfield* is a masterpiece. Never did objects remain more visible and present to the memory of a reader than those which he describes. The old house, the parlour, the kitchen, Peggotty's boat, and above all the school-yard, are interiors whose relief, energy, and precision are unequalled. Dickens has the passion and patience of the painters of his nation; he reckons his details one by one, notes the various hues of the old tree-trunks; sees the dilapidated cask, the green and broken flagstones, the chinks of the damp walls; he distinguishes the strange smells which rise from them; marks the size of the mossy spots, reads the names of the scholars carved on the door, and dwells on the form of the letters. And this minute description has nothing cold about it: if it is thus detailed, it is because the contemplation was intense; it proves its passion by its exactness. We felt this passion without accounting for it; suddenly we find it at the end of a page; the boldness of the style renders it visible, and the violence of the phrase attests the violence of the impression. Excessive metaphors bring before the mind grotesque fancies. We feel ourselves beset by extravagant visions. Mr. Mell takes his flute, and blows on it, says Copperfield, 'until I almost thought he would gradually blow his whole being into the large hole at the top, and ooze away at the keys.'[1] We think of Hoffmann's fantastic tales; we are arrested by a fixed idea, and our head begins to ache. These eccentricities are the style of sickness rather than of health.

'Tom Pinch, disabused at last, discovers that his master Pecksniff is a hypocritical rogue. He had so long been used to steep the Pecksniff of his fancy in his tea, and spread him out upon his toast, and take him as a relish with his beer, that he made but a poor breakfast on the first morning after his expulsion.'[2]

Therefore Dickens is admirable in the depicture of hallucinations. We see that he feels himself those of his characters, that he is engrossed by their ideas, that he enters into their madness. As an Englishman and a moralist, he has described remorse frequently. Perhaps it may be said that he makes a scarecrow of it, and that an artist is wrong to transform himself into an assistant of the policeman and the preacher. What of that? The portrait of Jonas Chuzzlewit is so terrible, that we may pardon it for being useful. Jonas, leaving his chamber secretly, has treacherously murdered his enemy, and thinks thenceforth to

[1] *David Copperfield*, ch. v. [2] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xxxvi.

breathe in peace; but the recollection of the murder gradually disorganises his mind, like poison. He is no longer able to control his ideas; they bear him on with the fury of a terrified horse. He is for ever thinking, and shuddering as he thinks, of the chamber where they believed he slept. He sees this chamber, counts the pattern, pictures the long folds of the dark curtains, the hollows of the bed which he has disarranged, the door at which some one might have knocked. The more he wants to escape from this vision, the more he is immersed in it; it is a burning gulf in which he rolls, struggling, with cries and sweats of agony. He fancies himself lying in his bed, as he ought to be, and an instant after he sees himself there. He fears this other self. The dream is so vivid, that he is not sure that he is not in London. 'He became in a manner his own ghost and phantom.' And this imaginary being, like a mirror, only redoubles before his conscience the image of assassination and punishment. He returns, and shuffles, with pale face, to the door of his chamber. He, a man of business, a reckoner, a coarse machine of positive reasoning, has become as fanciful as a nervous woman. He advances on tiptoe, as if he were afraid of rousing the imaginary man, whom he pictures lying in the bed. At the moment when he turns the key in the lock, 'a monstrous fear beset his mind. What if the murdered man were there before him!' At last he enters, and buries himself in his bed, burnt up with fever. 'He buried himself beneath the blankets,' so as to try not to see the cursed room; he sees it more clearly still. The rustling of the coverings, the buzz of an insect, the beatings of his heart, all cry to him, Murderer! His mind fixed with 'an agony of listening' on the door, he ends by thinking that people open it; he hears it creak. His senses are distorted; he dares not mistrust them, he dares no longer believe in them; and in this nightmare, in which drowned reason leaves nothing but a chaos of hideous forms, he finds no reality but the incessant burden of his convulsive despair. Thenceforth all his thoughts, dangers, the whole world disappears for him in 'the one dread question only,' 'When would they find the body in the wood?' He forces himself to distract his thoughts from this; they remain stamped and glued to it; they hold him to it as by a chain of iron. He continually figures himself going into the wood, 'going softly about it and about it among the leaves, approaching it nearer and nearer through a gap in the boughs, and startling the very flies, that were thickly sprinkled all over it, like heaps of dried currants.' And he always ends with the idea of the discovery; he expects news of it, listening rapt to the cries and shouts in the street, hearing men come in and go out, come up and go down. At the same time, he has ever before his eyes that corpse 'lying alone in the wood;' 'he was for ever showing and presenting it, as it were, to every creature whom he saw. Look here! do you know of this? Is it found? Do you suspect me?' If he had been condemned to bear the body in his arms, and lay it down for recogni-

tion at the feet of every one he met, it could not have been more constantly with him, or a cause of more monotonous and dismal occupation than it was in this state of his mind.[1]

Jonas is on the verge of madness. There are other characters quite mad. Dickens has drawn three or four portraits of madmen, very agreeable at first sight, but so true that they are in reality horrible. It needed an imagination like his, irregular, excessive, capable of fixed ideas, to exhibit the derangements of reason. Two especially there are, which make us laugh, and which make us shudder. Augustus, the gloomy maniac, who is on the point of marrying Miss Pecksniff; and poor Mr. Dick, half an idiot, half a monomaniac, who lives with Miss Trotwood. To understand these sudden exaltations, these unforeseen gloominesses, these incredible summersaults of perverted sensibility; to reproduce these hiatuses of thought, these interruptions of reasoning, this recurrence of a word, always the same, which breaks in upon a phrase attempted and overturns renascent reason; to see the stupid smile, the vacant look, the foolish and uneasy physiognomy of these haggard old children who painfully involve idea in idea, and stumble at every step on the threshold of the truth which they cannot attain, is a faculty which Hoffmann alone has possessed in an equal degree with Dickens. The play of these shattered reasons is like the creaking of a dislocated door; it makes one sick to hear it. We find, if we like, a discordant burst of laughter, but we discover still more easily a groan and a lamentation, and we are terrified to gauge the lucidity, strangeness, exaltation, violence of imagination which has produced such creations, which has carried them on and sustained them unbendingly to the end, and which found itself in its proper sphere in imitating and producing their irrationality.

III.

To what can this force be applied? Imaginations differ not only in their nature, but also in their object; after having gauged their energy, we must define their domain; in the broad world the artist makes a world for himself; involuntarily he chooses a class of objects which he prefers; others do not warm his genius, and he does not perceive them. Dickens does not perceive great things; this is the second feature of his imagination. Enthusiasm seizes him in connection with everything, especially in connection with vulgar objects, a curiosity shop, a sign-post, a town-crier. He has vigour, he does not attain beauty. His instrument gives vibrating sounds, but not harmonious. If he is describing a house, he will draw it with geometrical clearness; he will put all its colours in relief, discover a face and thought in the shutters and the pipes; he will make a sort of human being out of the house, grimacing and forcible, which will chain our regard, and which we shall never forget; but he will not see the grandeur of the long

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. li.

monumental lines, the calm majesty of the broad shadows boldly divided by the white plaster, the cheerfulness of the light which covers them, and becomes palpable in the black niches in which it is poured, as though to rest and to sleep. If he is painting a landscape, he will perceive the haws which dot with their red fruit the leafless hedges, the thin vapour streaming from a distant stream, the motions of an insect in the grass; but the deep poetry which would have seized the author of *Valentine* and *André* will escape him. He will be lost, like the painters of his country, in the minute and impassioned observation of small things; he will have no love of beautiful forms and fine colours. He will not perceive that the blue and the red, the straight line and the curve, are enough to compose vast concerts, which amidst so many various expressions maintain a grand serenity, and open up in the depths of the soul a spring of health and happiness. Happiness is lacking in him; his inspiration is a feverish rapture, which does not select its objects, which animates promiscuously the ugly, the vulgar, the ridiculous, and which, communicating to his creations an indescribable jerkiness and violence, deprives them of the delight and harmony which in other hands they might have retained. Miss Ruth is a very pretty housekeeper; she puts on her apron: what a treasure this apron is! Dickens turns it over and over, like a milliner's shopman who wants to sell it. She holds it in her hands, then she puts it round her waist, ties the strings, spreads it out, smoothes it that it may fall well. What does she not do with her apron? And how delighted is Dickens during these innocent occupations! He utters little exclamations of joyous fun. 'Oh heaven, what a wicked little stomacher!' He apostrophises a ring, he sports round Ruth, claps his hands for pleasure. It is much worse when she is making the pudding; there is a whole scene, dramatic and lyric, with exclamations, protasis, sudden inversions, as complete as a Greek tragedy. These kitchen refinements and this waggery of imagination make us think (by way of contrast) of the interior pictures of George Sand, of the room of Geneviève the flower-girl. She, like Ruth, is making a useful object, very useful, since she will sell it to-morrow for tenpence; but this object is a full-blown rose, whose fragile petals are moulded by her fingers as by the fingers of a fairy, whose fresh corolla is purpled with a vermilion as tender as that of her cheeks; a fragile masterpiece which has bloomed on an evening of poetic emotion, whilst from her window she beholds in the sky the piercing and divine eyes of the stars, and in the depths of her virgin heart murmurs the first breath of love. Dickens does not need such a sight for his transports; a stage-coach throws him into dithyrambs; the wheels, the splashing, the cracking whip, the clatter of the horses, harness, the vehicle; here is enough to transport him. He feels sympathetically the motion of the coach; it bears him along with it; he hears the gallop of the horses in his brain, and goes off, uttering this ode, which seems to proceed from the guard's horn:

'Yoho, among the gathering shades; making of no account the deep reflections of the trees, but scampering on through light and darkness, all the same, as if the light of London, fifty miles away, were quite enough to travel by, and some to spare. Yoho, beside the village green, where cricket-players linger yet, and every little indentation made in the fresh grass by bat or wicket, ball or player's foot, sheds out its perfume on the night. Away with four fresh horses from the Bald-faced Stag, where topers congregate about the door admiring; and the last team, with traces hanging loose, go roaming off towards the pond, until observed and shouted after by a dozen throats, while volunteering boys pursue them. Now, with a clattering of hoofs and striking out of fiery sparks, across the old stone bridge, and down again into the shadowy road, and through the open gate, and far away, away, into the wold. Yoho!

'Yoho, behind there, stop that bugle for a moment! Come creeping over to the front, along the coach-roof, guard, and make one at this basket! Not that we slacken in our pace the while, not we: we rather put the bits of blood upon their mettle, for the greater glory of the snack. Ah! It is long since this bottle of old wine was brought into contact with the mellow breath of night, you may depend, and rare good stuff it is to wet a bugler's whistle with. Only try it. Don't be afraid of turning up your finger, Bill, another pull! Now, take your breath, and try the bugle, Bill. There's music! There's a tone! "Over the hills and far away," indeed, Yoho! The skittish mare is all alive to-night. Yoho! Yoho!

'See the bright moon; high up before we know it; making the earth reflect the objects on its breast like water. Hedges, trees, low cottages, church steeples, blighted stumps and flourishing young slips, have all grown vain upon the sudden, and mean to contemplate their own fair images till morning. The poplars yonder rustle, that their quivering leaves may see themselves upon the ground. Not so the oak; trembling does not become *him;* and he watches himself in his stout old burly stedfastness, without the motion of a twig. The moss-grown gate, ill poised upon its creaking hinges, crippled and decayed, swings to and fro before its glass like some fantastic dowager; while our own ghostly likeness travels on, Yoho! Yoho! through ditch and brake, upon the ploughed land and the smooth, along the steep hill-side and steeper wall, as if it were a phantom-Hunter.

'Clouds too! And a mist upon the Hollow! Not a dull fog that hides it, but a light, airy, gauze-like mist, which in our eyes of modest admiration gives a new charm to the beauties it is spread before: as real gauze has done ere now, and would again, so please you, though we were the Pope. Yoho! Why, now we travel like the Moon herself. Hiding this minute in a grove of trees, next minute in a patch of vapour, emerging now upon our broad, clear course, withdrawing now, but always dashing on, our journey is a counterpart of hers. Yoho! A match against the Moon!

'The beauty of the night is hardly felt, when Day comes leaping up. Yoho! Two stages, and the country roads are almost changed to a continuous street. Yoho, past market gardens, rows of houses, villas, crescents, terraces, and squares; past waggons, coaches, carts; past early workmen, late stragglers, drunken men, and sober carriers of loads; past brick and mortar in its every shape; and in among the rattling pavements, where a jaunty-seat upon a coach is not so easy to preserve! Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old Inn-yard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London!'[1]

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[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. xxxvi.

All this to tell us that Tom Pinch is come to London! This fit of lyricism, in which the most poetic extravagances spring from the most vulgar commonplaces, like sickly flowers growing in a broken old flower-pot, displays in its natural and quaint contrasts all the sides of Dickens' imagination. We shall have his portrait if we picture to ourselves a man who, with a stewpan in one hand and a postilion's whip in the other, took to making prophecies.

IV.

The reader already foresees what vehement emotions this species of imagination will produce. The mode of conception in a man governs the mode of thought. When the mind, barely attentive, follows the indistinct outlines of a rough sketched image, joy and grief glide past him with insensible touch. When the mind, with rapt attention, penetrates the minute details of a precise image, joy and grief shake the whole man. Dickens has this attention, and sees these details: this is why he meets everywhere with objects of exaltation. He never abandons his impassioned tone; he never rests in a natural style and in simple narrative; he only rails or weeps; he writes but satires or elegies. He has the feverish sensibility of a woman who laughs loudly, or melts into tears at the sudden shock of the slightest occurrence. This impassioned style is extremely potent, and to it may be attributed half the glory of Dickens. The majority of men have only weak emotions. We labour mechanically, and yawn much; three-fourths of the things leave us cold; we go to sleep by habit, and we end by ceasing to remark the household scenes, petty details, stale adventures, which are the basis of our existence. A man comes, who suddenly renders them interesting; nay, who makes them dramatic, changes them into objects of admiration, tenderness, and dread. Without leaving the fireside or the omnibus, we are trembling, our eyes full of tears, or shaken by fits of inextinguishable laughter. We are transformed, our life is doubled, our soul had been vegetating; now it feels, suffers, loves. The contrast, the rapid succession, the number of the sentiments, add further to its trouble; we are immersed for two hundred pages in a torrent of new emotions, contrary and increasing, which communicates its violence to the mind, which carries it away in digressions and falls, and only casts it on the bank enchanted and exhausted. It is an intoxication, and on a delicate soul the effect would be too forcible; but it suits the English public, and that public has justified it.

This sensibility can hardly have more than two issues—laughter and tears. There are others, but they are only reached by lofty eloquence; they are the path to sublimity, and we have seen that for Dickens this path is cut off. Yet there is no writer who knows better how to touch and melt; he makes us weep, absolutely shed tears; before reading him we did not know there was so much pity in the heart. The grief of a child, who wishes to be loved by his father, and whom his father

does not love; the despairing love and slow death of a poor half-imbecile young man: all these pictures of secret grief leave an ineffaceable impression. The tears which he sheds are genuine, and comparison is their only source. Balzac, George Sand, Stendahl have also recorded human miseries; is it possible to write without recording them? But they do not seek them out, they hit upon them; they do not dream of displaying them to us; they were going elsewhere, and met them on their way. They love art better than men. They delight only in setting in motion the springs of passions, in combining large systems of events, in constructing powerful characters: they do not write from sympathy with the wretched, but from love of beauty. When you have finished George Sand's *Mauprat*, your emotion is not pure sympathy; you feel, in addition, a deep admiration for the greatness and the generosity of love. When you have come to the end of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, your heart is bruised by the tortures of that anguish; but the astonishing inventiveness, the accumulation of facts, the abundance of general ideas, the force of analysis, transport you into the world of science, and your painful sympathy is calmed by the spectacle of this physiology of the heart. Dickens never calms our sympathy; he selects subjects in which it alone, and more than elsewhere, is unfolded: the long oppression of children persecuted and starved by their schoolmaster; the life of the factory-hand Stephen, robbed and degraded by his wife, driven away by his fellows, accused of theft, lingering six days at the bottom of a pit into which he has fallen, maimed, consumed by fever, and dying when he is at length discovered. Rachael, his only friend, is there; and his delirium, his cries, the storm of despair in which Dickens envelopes his characters, have prepared the way for the painful picture of this resigned death. The bucket brings up a poor, crushed human creature, and we see 'the pale, worn, patient face looking up to the sky, whilst the right hand, shattered and hanging down, seems as if waiting to be taken by another hand.' Yet he smiles, and feebly said 'Rachael!' She stooped down, and bent over him until her eyes were between his and the sky, for he could not so much as turn them to look at her. Then in broken words he tells her of his long agony. Ever since he was born he has met with nothing but misery and injustice; it is the rule—the weak suffer, and are made to suffer. This pit into which he had fallen 'has cost hundreds and hundreds o' men's lives—fathers, sons, brothers, dear to thousands an' thousands, an' keeping 'em fro' want and hunger. . . . The men that works in pits . . . ha' pray'n an' pray'n the lawmakers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em, but to spare 'em for th' wives and children, that they loves as well as gentlefok loves theirs;' all in vain. 'When the pit was in work, it killed wi'out need; when 't is let alone, it kills wi'out need.'[1] Stephen says this without anger, quietly merely, as the truth. He has his

[1] *Hard Times*, bk. 3, ch. vi.

calumniator before him; he does not get angry, accuses no one; he only charges the father to deny the calumny as soon as he shall be dead. His heart is up there in heaven, where he has seen a star shining. In his agony, on his bed of stones, he has gazed upon it, and the tender and touching regard of the divine star has calmed, by its mystical serenity, the anguish of mind and body.

'"It ha' shined upon me," he said reverently, "in my pain and trouble down below. It ha' shined into my mind. I ha' lookn at't and thowt o' thee, Rachael, till the muddle in my mind have cleared awa, above a bit, I hope. If soom ha' been wantin' in unnerstan'in' me better, I, too, ha' been wantin' in unnerstan'in' them better.

'"In my pain an' trouble, lookin' up yonder,—wi' it shinin' on me.—I ha' seen more clear, and ha' made it my dyin' prayer that aw th' world may on'y coom toogether more, an' get a better unnerstan'in' o' one another, than when I were in't my own weak seln.

'"Often as I coom to myseln, and found it shinin' on me down there in my trouble, I thowt it were the star as guided to Our Saviour's home. I awmust think it be the very star!"

'They carried him very gently along the fields, and down the lanes, and over the wide landscape; Rachael always holding the hand in hers. Very few whispers broke the mournful silence. It was soon a funeral procession. The star had shown him where to find the God of the poor; and through humility, and sorrow, and forgiveness, he had gone to his Redeemer's rest.'[1]

This same writer is the most railing, the most comic, the most jocose of English authors. And it is moreover a singular gaiety! It is the only kind which would harmonise with this impassioned sensibility. There is a laughter akin to tears. Satire is the sister of elegy: if the second pleads for the oppressed, the first combats the oppressors. Wounded by misfortunes and vices, Dickens avenges himself by ridicule. He does not paint, he punishes. Nothing could be more damaging than those long chapters of sustained irony, in which the sarcasm is pressed, line after line, more sanguinary and piercing in the chosen adversary. There are five or six against the Americans,—their bribed newspapers, their drunken journalists, their cheating speculators, their women authors, their coarseness, their familiarity, their insolence, their brutality,—enough to captivate an absolutist, and to justify the Liberal who, returning from New York, embraced with tears in his eyes the first gendarme whom he saw on landing at Havre. Foundations of industrial societies, interviews of a member of Parliament and his constituents, instructions of a member of the House of Commons to his secretary, the display of great banking-houses, the laying of the first stone of a public building, every kind of ceremony and lie of English society, are depicted with the fire and bitterness of Hogarth. There are parts where the comic element is so violent, that it has the appearance of a vengeance—as the story of Jonas Chuzzlewit.

[1] *Hard Times*, bk. 3, ch. vi.

'The very first word which this excellent boy learnt to spell was gain, and the second (when he came into two syllables) was money.' This fine education had unfortunately produced two results: first, that, 'having been long taught by his father to overreach everybody, he had imperceptibly acquired a love of overreaching that venerable monitor himself;' secondly, that being taught to regard everything as a matter of property, 'he had gradually come to look with impatience on his parent as a certain amount of personal estate,' who would be very well 'secured' in that particular description of strong-box which is commonly called a coffin, and banked in the grave.[1] 'Is that my father snoring, Pecksniff?' asked Jonas; 'tread upon his foot; will you be so good? The foot next you is the gouty one.'[2] He is introduced to us with this mark of attention; you may judge of the rest. At bottom, Dickens is gloomy, like Hogarth; but, like Hogarth, he makes us burst with laughter by the buffoonery of his inventions and the violence of his caricatures. He pushes his characters to absurdity with unwonted boldness. Pecksniff hits off moral phrases and sentimental actions so grotesque, that they make him extravagant. Never were heard such monstrous oratorical displays. Sheridan had already painted an English hypocrite, Joseph Surface; but he differs from Pecksniff as much as a portrait of the eighteenth century differs from a cartoon of *Punch*. Dickens makes hypocrisy so deformed and monstrous, that his hypocrite ceases to resemble a man; you would call him one of those fantastic figures whose nose is greater than his body. This extravagant comicality springs from excess of imagination. Dickens uses the same spring throughout. The better to make us see the object he shows us, he dazzles the reader's eyes with it; but the reader is amused by this irregular fancy: the fire of the execution makes him forget that the scene is improbable, and he laughs heartily as he listens to the undertaker, Mould, enumerating the consolations which filial piety, well backed by money, may find in his shop. What grief could not be softened by

'"Four horses to each vehicle . . . velvet trappings . . . drivers in cloth cloaks and top-boots . . . the plumage of the ostrich, died black . . . any number of walking attendants, dressed in the first style of funeral fashion, and carrying batons tipped with brass . . . a place in Westminster Abbey itself, if he choose to invest it in such a purchase. Oh! do not let us say that gold is dross, when it can buy such things as these." "Ay, Mrs. Gamp, you are right," rejoined the undertaker. "We should be an honoured calling. We do good by stealth, and blush to have it mentioned in our little bills. How much consolation may I—even I," cried Mr. Mould, "have diffused among my fellow-creatures by means of my four long-tailed prancers, never harnessed under ten pund ten!"'[3]

Usually Dickens remains grave whilst drawing his caricatures. English wit consists in saying light jests in a solemn manner. Tone

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. viii. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.* ch. xix.

and ideas are then in contrast; every contrast makes a strong impression. Dickens loves to produce them, and his public to hear them.

If at times he forgets to castigate his neighbour, if he tries to sport, to amuse himself, he is no longer happy over it. The element of the English character is its want of happiness. The ardent and tenacious imagination of Dickens is impressed with things too firmly, to pass lightly and gaily over the surface. He leans, he penetrates, works into, hollows them out; all these violent actions are efforts, and all efforts are sufferings. To be happy, a man must be light-minded, as a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, or sensual, as an Italian of the sixteenth; a man must not get anxious about things, to enjoy them. Dickens does get anxious, and does not enjoy. Take a little comical accident, such as you meet with in the street—a gust of wind, which blows about the garments of a messenger. Scaramouche will grin with good humour; Lesage smile like a diverted man; both will pass by and think no more of it. Dickens muses over it for half a page. He sees so clearly all the effects of the wind, he puts himself so entirely in its place, he imagines for it a will so impassioned and precise, he shakes the clothes of the poor man hither and thither so violently and so long, he turns the gust into a tempest, into a persecution so great, that we are made giddy; and even whilst we laugh, we feel in ourselves too much emotion and compassion to laugh heartily:

'And a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, tooth-chattering place it was, to wait in, in the winter-time, as Toby Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner—especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth, express, from the confines of the earth, to have a blow at Toby. And oftentimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than it had expected; for, bouncing round the corner, and passing Toby, it would suddenly wheel round again, as if it cried: "Why, here he is!" Incontinently his little white apron would be caught up over his head like a naughty boy's garments, and his feeble little cane would be seen to wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his hand, and his legs would undergo tremendous agitation; and Toby himself, all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in that, would be so banged and buffeted, and touzled, and worried, and hustled, and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things but one degree removed from a positive miracle that he wasn't carried up bodily into the air as a colony of frogs or snails or other portable creatures sometimes are, and rained down again, to the great astonishment of the natives, on some strange corner of the world where ticket-porters are unknown.'[1]

If now you would picture in a glance this imagination,—so lucid, so violent, so passionately fixed on the object selected, so deeply touched by little things, so wholly attached to the details and sentiments of vulgar life, so fertile in incessant emotions, so powerful in rousing painful pity, sarcastic raillery, nervous gaiety,—you must fancy a London street on a rainy winter's night. The flickering light of the gas dazzles your eyes, streams through the shop windows, floods over

[1] *The Chimes*, The First Quarter.

the passing forms; and its harsh light, settling upon their contracted features, brings out, with endless detail and damaging force, their wrinkles, deformities, troubled expression. If in this close and dirty crowd you discover the fresh face of a young girl, this artificial light covers it with false and excessive tones; it makes it stand out against the rainy and cold blackness with a strange halo. The mind is struck with wonder; but you carry your hand to your eyes to cover them, and, whilst you admire the force of this light, you involuntarily think of the true country sun and the tranquil beauty of day.

§ 2.—The Public.

I.

Plant this talent on English soil; the literary opinion of the country will direct its growth and explain its fruits. For this public opinion is its private opinion; it does not submit to it as to an external constraint, but feels it inwardly as an inner persuasion; it does not weary, but develops it, and only repeats aloud what it said to itself in secret.

The counsels of this public taste are somewhat like this; the more powerful because they agree with its natural inclination, and urge it upon its special course:—

'Be moral. All your novels must be such as may be read by young girls. We are practical minds, and we would not have literature corrupt practical life. We believe in family life, and we would not have literature paint the passions which attack family life. We are Protestants, and we have preserved something of the severity of our fathers against enjoyment and passions. Amongst these, love is the worst. Beware against resembling in this respect the most illustrious of our neighbours. Love is the hero of all George Sand's novels. Married or not, she thinks it beautiful, holy, sublime in itself; and she says so. Don't believe this; and if you do believe it, don't say it. It is a bad example. Love thus represented makes marriage a secondary matter. It ends in marriage, or destroys it, or does without it, according to circumstances; but whatever it does, it treats it as inferior; it does not recognise any holiness in it, beyond that which love gives it, and holds it impious if it is excluded. A novel of this sort is a plea for the heart, the imagination, enthusiasm, nature; but it is often a plea against society and law: we do not suffer society and law to be touched, directly or indirectly. To present a feeling as divine, to bow before it all institutions, to carry it through a series of generous actions, to sing with a sort of heroic inspiration the combats which it wages and the attacks which it sustains, to enrich it with all the force of eloquence, to crown it with all the flowers of poetry, is to paint the life, which it results in, as more beautiful and loftier than others, to set it far above all passions and duties, in a sublime region, on a throne, whence it shines as a light, a consolation, a hope, and draws all hearts towards

it. Perhaps this is the world of artists; it is not the world of ordinary men. Perhaps it is agreeable to nature; we make nature bend before the interests of society. George Sand paints impassioned women; paint you for us good women. George Sand makes us desire to be in love; do you make us desire to be married.

'This has its disadvantages, without doubt; art suffers by it, if the public gains. Though your characters give the best examples, your works will be of less value. No matter; you may console yourself with the thought that you are moral. Your lovers will be uninteresting; for the only interest natural to their age is the violence of passion, and you cannot paint passion. In *Nicholas Nickleby* you will show two good young men, like all young men, marrying two good young women, like all young women; in *Martin Chuzzlewit* you will show two more good young men, perfectly resembling the other two, marrying again two good young women, perfectly resembling the other two; in *Dombey and Son* there will be only one good young man and one good young woman. Otherwise, no difference. And so on. The number of your marriages is marvellous, and you marry enough couples to people England. More curious still, they are all disinterested, and the young man and young woman snap their fingers at money as sincerely as at the Opéra Comique. You will not cease to dwell on the pretty shynesses of the betrothed, the tears of the mothers, the tears of all the guests, the cheering and touching scenes of the dinner table; you will create a crowd of family pictures, all touching, and all as agreeable as screen-paintings. The reader will be moved; he will think he is beholding the innocent loves and virtuous attentions of a little boy and girl of ten. He should like to say to them: "Good little people, continue to be very proper." But the chief interest will be for young girls, who will learn in how devoted and yet suitable a manner a lover ought to pay his court. If you venture on a seduction, as in *Copperfield*, you will not relate the progress, ardour, intoxication of the amour; you will only depict its miseries, despair, and remorse. If in *Copperfield* and the *Cricket on the Hearth* you present a troubled marriage and a suspected wife, you will make haste to restore peace to the marriage and innocence to the wife; and you will deliver, by her mouth, so splendid a eulogy on marriage, that it might serve for a model to Emile Augier.[1] If in *Hard Times* the wife treads on the border of crime, she shall check herself there. If in *Dombey and Son* she flees from her husband's roof, she will remain pure, will only incur the appearance of crime, and will treat her lover in such a manner that the reader will wish to be the husband. If, lastly, in *Copperfield* you relate the emotions and follies of love, you will rally this poor affection, depict its littlenesses, not venture to make us hear the ardent, generous, undisciplined blast of the all-powerful passion; you will turn it into

[1] A living French author, whose dramas are all said to have a moral purpose.—Tr.

a toy for good children, or a pretty marriage-trinket. But marriage will compensate you. Your genius of observation and taste for details will be exercised on the scenes of domestic life; you will excel in the picture of a fireside, a family dialogue, children on the knees of their mother, a husband watching by lamplight by his sleeping wife, the heart full of joy and courage, because it feels that it is working for its own. You will find charming or grave portraits of women: of Dora, who after marriage continues to be a little girl, whose pouting, prettinesses, childishnesses, laughter, make the house gay, like the chirping of a bird; Esther, whose perfect kindness and divine innocence cannot be affected by trials or years; Agnes, so calm, patient, sensible, pure, worthy of respect, a very model of a wife, sufficient in herself to claim for marriage the respect which we demand for it. And when it is necessary to show the beauty of these duties, the greatness of this conjugal love, the depth of the sentiment which ten years of confidence, cares, and reciprocal devotion have created, you will find in your sensibility, so long constrained, speeches as pathetic as the strongest words of love.[1]

'The worst novels are not those which glorify love. A man must live across the Channel to dare what the French have dared. With them, some admire Balzac; but no man would tolerate him. Some will pretend that he is not immoral; but every one will recognise that he always and everywhere makes morality an abstraction. George Sand has only celebrated one passion; Balzac has celebrated them all. He has considered them as forces; and holding that force is beautiful, he has supported them by their causes, surrounded them by their circumstances, developed them in their effects, pushed them to an extreme, and magnified them so as to make them into sublime monsters, more systematic and more true than the truth. We do not admit that a man only is an artist, and nothing else. We would not have him separate himself from his conscience, and lose sight of the practical. We will never consent to see that such is the leading feature of our own Shakspeare; we will not recognise that he, like Balzac, brings his heroes to crime and monomania, and that, like him, he lives in a land of pure logic and imagination. We have changed much since the sixteenth century, and we condemn now what we approved formerly. We would not have the reader interested in a miser, an ambitious man, a rake. And he is interested in them when the writer, neither praising nor blaming, sets himself to unfold the mood, training, phrenology, and habits of mind which have impressed in him this primitive inclination, to prove the necessity of its effects, to lead it through all its stages, to show the greater power which age and contentment give, to expose the irresistible fall which hurls man into madness or death. The reader, caught by this reasoning, admires the

[1] *David Copperfield*, ch. lxv.; the scene between the doctor and his wife.

work which it has produced, and forgets to be indignant against the personage created. He says, What a splendid miser! and thinks not of the evils which avarice produces. He becomes a philosopher and an artist, and remembers not that he is an upright man. Always recollect that you are such, and renounce the beauties which may flourish on this evil soil.

'Amongst these the first is greatness. A man must be interested in passions to comprehend their full effect, to count all their springs, to describe their whole course. They are diseases; if a man is content to blame them, he will never know them; if you are not a physiologist, if you are not enamoured of them, if you do not make your heroes out of them, if you do not start with pleasure at the sight of a fine feature of avarice, as at the sight of a valuable symptom, you will not be able to unfold their vast system, and to display their fatal greatness. You will not have this immoral merit; and, moreover, it does not suit your species of mind. Your extreme sensibility, and ever-ready irony, must needs be exercised; you have not sufficient calmness to penetrate to the depths of a character, you prefer to weep over or to rail at him; you lay the blame on him, make him your friend or foe, render him touching or odious; you do not depict him; you are too impassioned, and not enough inquisitive. On the other hand, the tenacity of your imagination, the vehemence and fixity with which you impress your thought into the detail you wish to grasp, limit your knowledge, arrest you in a single feature, prevent you from reaching all the parts of a soul, and from sounding its depths. Your imagination is too lively, too meagre. These, then, are the characters you will outline. You will grasp a personage in a single attitude, you will see of him only that, and you will impose it upon him from beginning to end. His face will have always the same expression, and this expression will be almost always a grimace. They will have a sort of knack which will not quit them. Miss Mercy will laugh at every word; Mark Tapley will say "jolly" in every scene; Mrs. Gamp will be ever talking of Mrs. Harris; Dr. Chillip will not venture a single action free from timidity; Mr. Micawber will speak through three volumes the same kind of emphatic phrases, and will pass five or six times, with comical suddenness, from joy to grief. Each of your characters will be a vice, a virtue, a ridicule personified; and the passion, which you lend it, will be so frequent, so invariable, so absorbing, that it will no longer be like a living man, but an abstraction in man's clothes. The French have a Tartuffe like your Pecksniff, but the hypocrisy which he represents has not destroyed the rest of his character; if he adds to the comedy by his vice, he belongs to humanity by his nature. He has, besides his ridiculous feature, a character and a mood; he is coarse, strong, red in the face, brutal, sensual; the vehemence of his blood makes him bold; his boldness makes him calm; his boldness, his calm, his decisive readiness, his scorn of men, make him a great politician. When he has

entertained the public through five acts, he still offers to the psychologist and the physician more than one subject of study. Your Pecksniff will offer nothing to these. He will only serve to instruct and amuse the public. He will be a living satire of hypocrisy, and nothing more. If you give him a taste for brandy, it is gratuitously; in the mood which you assign to him, nothing requires it: he is so steeped in oily hypocrisy, in softness, in a flowing style, in literary phrases, in tender morality, that the rest of his nature has disappeared; it is a mask, and not a man. But this mask is so grotesque and energetic, that it will be useful to the public, and will diminish the number of hypocrites. It is our end and yours, and the list of your characters will have rather the effect of a book of satires than of a portrait gallery.

'For the same reason, these satires, though united, will continue effectually detached, and will not constitute a genuine collection. You began with essays, and your larger novels are only essays tagged together. The only means of composing a natural and solid whole is to write the history of a passion or of a character, to take them up at their birth, to see them increase, alter, become destroyed, to understand the inner necessity of their development. You do not follow this development; you always keep your character in the same attitude; he is a miser, or a hypocrite, or a good man to the end, and always after the same fashion: thus he has no history. You can only change the circumstances in which he is met with, you do not change him; he remains motionless, and at every shock that touches him, emits the same sound. The variety of events which you contrive is therefore only an amusing phantasmagoria; they have no connection, they do not form a system, they are but a heap. You will only write lives, adventures, memoirs, sketches, collections of scenes, and you will not be able to compose an action. But if the literary taste of your nation, added to the natural direction of your genius, imposes upon you moral intentions, forbids you the lofty depicture of characters, vetoes the composition of united aggregates, it presents to your observation, sensibility, and satire, a succession of original figures which belong only to England, which, drawn by your hand, will form a unique gallery, and which, with the stamp of your genius, will offer that of your country and of your time.'

§ 3.—The Characters.

I.

Take away the grotesque characters, who are only introduced to fill up and to excite laughter, and you will find that all Dickens' characters belong to two classes—people who have feelings and emotions, and people who have none. He contrasts the souls which nature creates with those which society deforms. One of his last novels, *Hard Times*, is an abstract of all the rest. He there exalts instinct above reason, intuition of heart above positive science; he attacks education

built on statistics, figures, and facts; overwhelms the positive and mercantile spirit with misfortune and ridicule; combats the pride, hardness, selfishness of the merchant and the aristocrat; falls foul of manufacturing towns, towns of smoke and mud, which fetter the body in an artificial atmosphere, and the mind in a factitious existence. He seeks out poor artisans, mountebanks, a foundling, and crushes beneath their common sense, generosity, delicacy, courage, and sweetness, the false science, false happiness, and false virtue of the rich and powerful who despise them. He satirises oppressive society; praises oppressed nature; and his elegiac genius, like his satirical genius, finds ready to his hand in the English world around him, the sphere which it needs for its development.

II.

The first fruits of English society is hypocrisy. It ripens here under the double breath of religion and morality; we know their popularity and dominion across the Channel. In a country where it is scandalous to laugh on Sunday, where the gloomy Puritan has preserved something of his old rancour against happiness, where the critics of ancient history insert dissertations on the virtue of Nebuchadnezzar, it is natural that the appearance of morality should be serviceable. It is a needful coin: those who lack good money coin bad; and the more public opinion declares it precious, the more it is counterfeited. This vice is therefore English. Mr. Pecksniff is not found in France. His speech would disgust Frenchmen. If they have an affectation, it is not of virtue, but of vice: if they wish to succeed, they would be wrong to speak of their principles: they prefer to confess their weaknesses; and if they have quacks, they are trumpeters of immorality. They had their hypocrites once, but it was when religion was popular. Since Voltaire, Tartuffe is impossible. Frenchmen no longer try to affect a piety which would deceive no one and lead to nothing. Hypocrisy comes and goes, varying with the state of morals, religion, and mind; see, then, how conformable that of Pecksniff is to the dispositions of his country. He does not, like Tartuffe, utter theological phrases; he expands altogether in philanthropic tirades. He has marched with the age; he has become a humanitarian philosopher. He has called his daughters *Mercy* and *Charity*. He is tender, he is kind, he gives vent to domestic effusions. He innocently exhibits, when visited, charming domestic scenes; he displays his paternal heart, marital sentiments, the kindly feeling of a good house-master. The family virtues are honoured now-a-days; he must muffle himself therewith. Orgon formerly said, as instructed by Tartuffe:

> 'Et je verrais périr parents, enfants, mère, et femme,
> Que je m'en soucierais autant que de cela.' [1]

[1] Molière, *Tartuffe*, i. vi.

Modern virtue and English piety think otherwise; we must not despise this world in view of the next; we must improve it. Tartuffe will speak of his hair-shirt and his discipline; Pecksniff, of his comfortable little parlour, of the charm of friendship, the beauties of nature. He will try to bring men together. He will be like a member of the Peace Society. He will develop the most touching considerations on the benefits and beauties of union among men. It will be impossible to hear him without being affected. Men are refined now-a-days, they have read much elegiac poetry; their sensibility is more active; they can no longer be deceived by the gross impudence of Tartuffe. This is why Mr. Pecksniff will use gestures of sublime long-suffering, smiles of ineffable compassion, starts, movements of recklessness, graces, tendernesses which will seduce the most reserved and charm the most delicate. The English in their Parliament, meetings, associations, public ceremonies, have learned the oratorical phraseology, the abstract terms, the style of political economy, of the newspaper and the prospectus. Pecksniff will talk like a prospectus. He will possess its obscurity, its wordiness, and its emphasis. He will seem to soar above the earth, in the region of pure ideas, in the bosom of truth. He will resemble an apostle, brought up in the *Times* office. He will declaim general ideas on every occasion. He will find a moral lesson in the ham and eggs he has just eaten:

'Even the worldly goods of which we have just disposed, even they have their moral. See how they come and go. Every pleasure is transitory.'[1]

'"The process of digestion, as I have been informed by anatomical friends, is one of the most wonderful works of nature. I do not know how it may be with others, but it is a great satisfaction to me to know, when regaling on my humble fare, that I am putting in motion the most beautiful machinery with which we have any acquaintance. I really feel at such times as if I was doing a public service. When I have wound myself up, if I may employ such a term," said Mr. Pecksniff with exquisite tenderness, "and know that I am Going, I feel that in the lesson afforded by the works within me, I am a Benefactor to my Kind!"'[2]

As he folds his napkin, he will rise to lofty contemplations. You recognise a new species of hypocrisy. Vices, like virtues, change in every age.

The practical, as well as the moral spirit, is English; by commerce, labour, and government, this people has acquired the taste and talent for business; this is why they regard the French as children and madmen. The excess of this disposition is the destruction of imagination and sensibility. Man becomes a speculative machine, in which figures and facts are set in array; he denies the life of the mind and the joys of the heart; he sees in the world nothing but loss and gain; he becomes hard, harsh, greedy, and avaricious; he treats men as machinery; on a certain day he finds himself simply a merchant, banker, statistician; he has ceased to be a man. Dickens has multiplied portraits of the positive

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. ii. [2] *Ibid.* ch. viii.

man—Ralph Nickleby, Scrooge, Anthony Chuzzlewit, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Alderman Cute, Mr. Murdstone and his sister, Bounderby, Gradgrind: there are such in all his novels. Some are so by education, others by nature; but all are odious, for they all take in hand to rail at and destroy kindness, sympathy, compassion, disinterested affections, religious emotions, enthusiasm of fancy, all that is lovely in man. They oppress children, strike women, starve the poor, insult the wretched. The best are machines of polished steel, methodically performing their regular duties, and not knowing that they make others suffer. These kinds of men are not found in France. Their rigidity is not in the French character. They are produced in England by a school which has its philosophy, its great men, its glory, and which has never been established amongst the French. More than once, it is true, French writers have depicted avaricious men, men of business, and shopkeepers: Balzac is full of them; but he explains them by their imbecility, or makes them monsters, like Grandet and Gobseck. Those of Dickens constitute a real class, and represent a national vice. Read this passage of *Hard Times*, and see if, body and soul, Mr. Gradgrind is not wholly English:

'"Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!"

'The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasized his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found commodious cellarage in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry, and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum-pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was—all helped the emphasis.

'"In this life we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!"

'The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of little vessels then and there arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim.[1]

'"Thomas Gradgrind, sir! A man of realities. A man of facts and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing for anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir—peremptorily Thomas—Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a

[1] *Hard Times*, book i. ch. i.

pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to. It is a mere question of figures, a case of simple arithmetic. You might hope to get some other nonsensical belief into the head of George Gradgrind, or Augustus Gradgrind, or John Gradgrind, or Joseph Gradgrind (all supposititious, non-existent persons), but into the head of Thomas Gradgrind—no, sir!"

'In such terms Mr. Gradgrind always mentally introduced himself, whether to his private circle of acquaintance, or to the public in general. In such terms, no doubt, substituting the words "boys and girls" for "sir," Thomas Gradgrind now presented Thomas Gradgrind to the little pitchers before him, who were to be filled so full of facts.'[1]

Another fault arising from the habit of commanding and striving is pride. It abounds in an aristocratic country, and no one has more soundly rated aristocracy than Dickens; all his portraits are sarcasms. James Harthouse, a dandy disgusted with everything, chiefly with himself, and rightly so; Lord Frederick Verisopht, a poor duped idiot, brutalised with drink, whose wit consists in staring at men and sucking his cane; Lord Feenix, a sort of mechanism of parliamentary phrases, out of order, and hardly able to finish the ridiculous periods into which he always takes care to lapse; Mrs. Skewton, a hideous old ruin, a coquette to the last, demanding rose-coloured curtains for her death-bed, and parading her daughter through all the drawing-rooms of England, in order to sell her to some vain husband; Sir John Chester, a wretch of high society, who, for fear of compromising himself, refuses to save his natural son, and refuses it with all kinds of airs, as he finishes his chocolate. But the most complete and most English picture of the aristocratic spirit is the portrait of a London merchant, Mr. Dombey.

In France people do not look for types among the merchants, but they are found among that class in England, as forcible as in the proudest châteaux. Mr. Dombey loves his house as if he were a nobleman, as much as himself. If he neglects his daughter and longs for a son, it is to perpetuate the old name of his bank. He has his ancestors in commerce, and he would have his descendants. He maintains traditions, and continues a power. At this height of opulence, and with this scope of action, he is a prince, and with a prince's position he has his feelings. You see there a character which could only be produced in a country whose commerce embraces the globe, where merchants are potentates, where a company of merchants has speculated upon continents, maintained wars, destroyed kingdoms, founded an empire of a hundred million men. The pride of such a man is not petty, but terrible; it is so calm and high, that to find a parallel we must read again the *Mémoires* of Saint Simon. Mr. Dombey has always commanded, and it does not enter his mind that he could yield to any one or anything. He receives flattery as a tribute to which he had a right, and sees men beneath him, at a vast distance, as beings made to beseech and obey him. His second

[1] *Hard Times*, book i. ch. ii.

wife, proud Edith Skewton, resists and scorns him; the pride of the merchant is pitted against the pride of the noble-born woman, and the restrained outbursts of this growing opposition reveal an intensity of passion, which souls thus born and bred alone could feel. Edith, to avenge herself, flees on the anniversary of her marriage, and gives herself the appearance of being an adulteress. It is then that the inflexible pride asserts itself in all its stiffness. He has driven out of the house his daughter, whom he believes the accomplice of his wife; he forbids the one or the other to be brought to his memory; he commands his sister and his friends to be silent; he receives guests with the same tone and the same coldness. Despairing in heart, eaten up by the insult, by the conscience of his failure, by the idea of public ridicule, he remains as firm, as haughty, as calm as ever. He launches out more recklessly in business, and is ruined; he is on the point of suicide. Hitherto all was well: the bronze column continued whole and unbroken; but the exigencies of public morality mar the idea of the book. His daughter arrives in the nick of time. She entreats him; he softens, she carries him away; he becomes the best of fathers, and spoils a fine novel.

III.

Let us look at some other personages. In contrast with these bad and factitious characters, produced by national institutions, you find good creatures such as nature made them; and first, children.

We have none in French literature. Racine's little Joas could only exist in a piece composed for the ladies' college of Saint Cyr; the little child speaks like a prince's son, with noble and acquired phrases, as if repeating his catechism. Now-a-days these portraits are only seen in France in New-year's books, written as models for good children. Dickens has painted his with special gratification; he did not think of edifying the public, and he has charmed it. All his children are of extreme sensibility; they love much, and they crave to be loved. To understand this gratification of the painter, and this choice of characters, we must think of their physical type. English children have a colour so fresh, a complexion so delicate, a skin so transparent, eyes so blue and pure, that they are like beautiful flowers. No wonder if a novelist loves them, lends to their soul a sensibility and innocence which shine forth from their looks, if he thinks that these frail and charming roses are crushed by the coarse hands which try to bend them. We must also imagine to ourselves the households in which they grow up. When at five o'clock the merchant and the clerk leave their office and their business, they return as quickly as possible to the pretty cottage, where their children have played all day on the lawn. The fireside by which they will pass the evening is a sanctuary, and domestic tenderness is the only poetry they need. A child deprived of these affections and this happiness will seem to be deprived of the air that we breathe, and the novelist will not find a

volume too much to explain its unhappiness. Dickens has recorded it in ten volumes, and at last he has written the history of *David Copperfield.* David is loved by his mother, and by an honest servant girl, Peggotty; he plays with her in the garden; he watches her sew; he reads to her the natural history of crocodiles; he fears the hens and geese, which strut in a menacing and ferocious manner in the yard; he is perfectly happy. His mother marries again, and all changes. The father-in-law, Mr. Murdstone, and his sister Jane, are harsh, methodic, and cold beings. Poor little David is every moment wounded by hard words. He dare not speak or move; he is afraid to kiss his mother; he feels himself weighed down, as by a leaden cloak, by the cold looks of the new master and mistress. He falls back on himself; mechanically studies the lessons assigned him; cannot learn them, so great is his dread of not knowing them. He is whipped, shut up with bread and water in a lonely room. He is terrified by night, and fears himself. He asks himself whether in fact he is not bad or wicked, and weeps. This incessant terror, hopeless and issueless, the spectacle of this wounded sensibility and stupefied intelligence, the long anxieties, the watches, the solitude of the poor imprisoned child, his passionate desire to kiss his mother or to weep on the breast of his nurse,—all this is sad to see. These children's griefs are as deep as the vexations of a man. It is the history of a frail plant, which was flourishing in a warm air, under a sweet sun, and which, suddenly transplanted to the snow, sheds its leaves and withers.

The common people are like the children, dependent, ill cultivated, akin to nature, and subject to oppression. That is to say, Dickens extols them. That is not new in France; the novels of Eugène Sue have given us more than one example, and the theme is as old as Rousseau; but in the hands of the English writer it has acquired a singular force. His heroes have admirable delicacy and devotion. They have nothing vulgar but their pronunciation; the rest is but nobility and generosity. You see a mountebank abandon his daughter, his only joy, for fear of harming her in any way. A young woman devotes herself to save the unworthy wife of a man who loves her, and whom she loves; the man dies; she continues, from pure self-sacrifice, to care for the degraded creature. A poor waggoner who thinks his wife unfaithful, loudly pronounces her innocent, and all his vengeance is to think only of loading her with tenderness and kindness. No one, according to Dickens, feels so strongly as they do the happiness of loving and being loved—the pure joys of domestic life. No one has so much compassion for those poor deformed and infirm creatures whom they so often bring into the world, and who seem only born to die. No one has a juster and more inflexible moral sense. I confess even that Dickens' heroes unfortunately resemble the indignant fathers of French melodramas. When old Peggotty learns that his niece is seduced, he sets off, stick in hand, and walks over France,

Germany, and Italy, to find her and bring her back to duty. But above all, they have an English sentiment, which fails in Frenchmen: they are Christians. It is not only women, as in France, who take refuge in the idea of another world; men turn also their thoughts towards it. In England, where there are so many sects, and every one chooses his own, each one believes in the religion he has made for himself; and this noble sentiment raises still higher the throne, upon which the uprightness of their resolution and the delicacy of their heart has placed them.

In reality, the novels of Dickens can all be reduced to one phrase, to wit: Be good, and love; there is genuine joy only in the emotions of the heart; sensibility is the whole man. Leave science to the wise, pride to the nobles, luxury to the rich; have compassion on humble wretchedness; the smallest and most despised being may in himself be worth as much as thousands of the powerful and the proud. Take care not to bruise the delicate souls which flourish in all conditions, under all costumes, in all ages. Believe that humanity, pity, forgiveness, are the finest things in man; believe that intimacy, expansion, tenderness, tears, are the finest things in the world. To live is nothing; to be powerful, learned, illustrious, is little; to be useful is not enough. He alone has lived and is a man who has wept at the remembrance of a benefit, given or received.

IV.

We do not believe that this contrast between the weak and the strong, or this outcry against society in favour of nature, are the caprice of an artist or the chance of the moment. When we penetrate deeply into the history of English genius, we find that its primitive foundation was impassioned sensibility, and that its natural expression was lyrical exaltation. Both were brought from Germany, and make up the literature existing before the Conquest. After an interval you find them again in the sixteenth century, when the French literature, introduced from Normandy, had passed away: they are the very soul of the nation. But the education of this soul was opposite to its genius; its history contradicted its nature; and its primitive inclination has clashed with all the great events which it has created or suffered. The chance of a victorious invasion and an imposed aristocracy, whilst establishing the enjoyment of political liberty, has impressed in the character habits of strife and pride. The chance of an insular position, the necessity of commerce, the abundant possession of the first materials for industry, have developed the practical faculties and the positive mind. The acquisition of these habits, faculties, and mind, added to the chance of an old hostility to Rome, and an old hatred against an oppressive church, has given birth to a proud and reasoning religion, replacing submission by independence, poetic theology by practical morality, and faith by discussion. Politics, business, and

religion, like three powerful machines, have created a new man above the old. Stern dignity, self-command, the need of domination, harshness in dominion, strict morality, without compromise or pity, a taste for figures and dry calculation, a dislike of facts not palpable and ideas not useful, ignorance of the invisible world, scorn of the weaknesses and tendernesses of the heart,—such are the dispositions which the stream of facts and the ascendency of institutions tend to confirm in their souls. But poetry and domestic life prove that they have only half succeeded. The old sensibility, oppressed and perverted, still lives and works. The poet subsists under the Puritan, the trader, the statesman. The social man has not destroyed the natural man. This frozen crust, this unsociable pride, this rigid attitude, often cover a good and tender being. It is the English mask of a German head; and when a talented writer, often a writer of genius, reaches the sensibility which is bruised or buried by education and national institutions, he moves his reader in the most inner depths, and becomes the master of all hearts.

CHAPTER II.

The Novel continued.—Thackeray.

I. Abundance and excellence of novels—Of manners in England—Superiority of Dickens and Thackeray—Comparison between them.

II. The satirist—His moral intentions—His moral dissertations.

III. Comparison of raillery in France and England—Difference of the two temperaments, tastes, and minds.

IV. Superiority of Thackeray in bitter and serious satire—Serious irony—Literary snobs—*Miss Blanche Amory*—Serious caricature—*Miss Hoggarty*.

V. Solidity and precision of this satirical conception—Resemblance of Thackeray and Swift—The duties of an ambassador.

VI. Misanthropy of Thackeray—Silliness of his heroines—Silliness of love—Inbred vice of human generosities and exaltations.

VII. His levelling tendencies—Default of characters and society in England—Aversions and preferences—The snob and the aristocrat—Portraits of the king, the great court noble, the county gentleman, the town gentleman—Advantages of this aristocratic institution—Exaggeration of the satire.

VIII. The artist—Idea of pure art—Wherein satire injures art—Wherein it diminishes the interest—Wherein it falsifies the characters—Comparison of Thackeray and Balzac—*Valérie Marneffe* and *Rebecca Sharp*.

IX. Attainment of pure art—Portrait of *Henry Esmond*—Historical talent of Thackeray—Conception of ideal man.

X. Literature is a definition of man—The definition according to Thackeray—Wherein it differs from the truth.

I.

THE novel of manners in England multiplies, and for this there are several reasons: first, it is born there, and every plant grows well in its own soil; secondly, it is an amusement: there is no music there as in Germany, or conversation as in France; and men who must think and feel find it a means of feeling and thinking. On the other hand, women take part in it with eagerness; amidst the nullity of gallantry and the coldness of religion, it gives scope for imagination and dreams. Finally, by its minute details and practical counsels, it opens up a career to the precise and moral mind. The critic thus is, as it were, swamped in this copiousness; he must select in order to grasp the whole, and confine himself to a few in order to embrace the whole.

In this crowd two men have appeared of a superior talent, original

and contrasted, popular on the same grounds, ministers to the same cause, moralists in comedy and drama, defenders of natural sentiments against social institutions; who, by the precision of their pictures, the depth of their observations, the succession and harshness of their attacks, have renewed, with other views and in another style, the old combative spirit of Swift and Fielding.

One, more ardent, more expansive, wholly given up to rapture, an impassioned painter of crude and dazzling pictures, a lyric prose-writer, omnipotent in laughter and tears, plunged into fantastic invention, painful sensibility, vehement buffoonery; and by the boldness of his style, the excess of his emotions, the grotesque familiarity of his caricatures, he has displayed all the forces and weaknesses of an artist, all the audacities, all the successes, and all the oddities of the imagination.

The other, more contained, more instructed and stronger, a lover of moral dissertations, a counsellor of the public, a sort of lay preacher, less bent on defending the poor, more bent on censuring man, has brought to the aid of satire a sustained common sense, a great knowledge of the heart, a consummate cleverness, a powerful reasoning, a treasure of meditated hatred, and has persecuted vice with all the weapons of reflection. By this contrast the one completes the other; and we may form an exact idea of the English taste, by adding the portrait of William Makepeace Thackeray to that of Charles Dickens.

§ 1.—The Satirist.

II.

No wonder if in England a novelist writes satires. A gloomy and reflective man is impelled to it by his character; he is still further impelled by the surrounding manners. He is not permitted to contemplate passions as poetic powers; he is bidden to appreciate them as moral qualities. His pictures become sentences; he is a counsellor rather than an observer, a judge rather than an artist. You see by what machinery Thackeray has changed novel into satire.

I open at random his three great works—*Pendennis*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Newcomes*. Every scene sets in relief a moral truth: the author desires that at every page we should find a judgment on vice and virtue; he has blamed or approved beforehand, and the dialogues or portraits are to him only means by which he adds our approbation to his approbation, our blame to his blame. He is giving us lessons; and under the sentiments which he describes, as under the events which he relates, we continually discover precepts of conduct and the intentions of the reformer.

On the first page of *Pendennis* you see the portait of an old Major, a man of the world, selfish and vain, seated comfortably in his club, at the table by the fire, and near the window, envied by surgeon Glowry, whom nobody invites, seeking in the records of aristocratic

entertainments for his own name, gloriously placed amongst those of illustrious guests. A family letter arrives. Naturally he puts it aside, and reads it carelessly after all the rest. He utters an exclamation of horror; his nephew wants to marry an actress. He has places booked in the coach (charging the sum which he disbursed for the seats to the account of the widow and the young scapegrace of whom he was guardian), and hastens to save the young fool. If there were a low marriage, what would become of his invitations? The manifest conclusion is: Let us not be selfish, or vain, or fond of good living, like the Major.

Chapter the second: Pendennis, father of the young man, was in his time an apothecary, but of good family, and grieving to be reduced to this trade. He comes into money; passes for a physician, marries the relative of a lord, tries to creep into high families. He boasts all his life of having been invited by Sir Pepin Ribstone to an entertainment. He buys an estate, tries to sink the apothecary, and shows off in the new glory of a landed proprietor. Each of these details is a concealed or evident sarcasm, which says to the reader: 'My good friend, remain the honest John Tomkins that you are; and for the love of your son and yourself, avoid taking the airs of a great nobleman.'

Old Pendennis dies. His son, the noble heir of the domain, 'Prince of Pendennis and Grand Duke of Fairoaks,' begins to reign over his mother, his cousin, and the servants. He sends wretched verses to the county papers, begins an epic poem, a tragedy in which sixteen persons die, a scathing history of the Jesuits, and defends church and king like a loyal Tory. He sighs after the ideal, wishes for an unknown maiden, and falls in love with an actress, a woman of thirty-two, who learns her parts mechanically, as ignorant and stupid as can be. Young folks, my dear friends, you are all affected, pretentious, dupes of yourselves and of others. Wait to judge the world until you have seen it, and do not think you are masters when you are scholars.

The instruction continues as long as the life of Arthur. Like Lesage in *Gil Blas*, and Balzac in *Le Père Goriot*, the author of *Pendennis* depicts a young man having some talent, endowed with good feelings, even generous, desiring to make a name, and falling in with the maxims of the world; but Lesage only wished to amuse us, and Balzac only wished to stir our passions: Thackeray, from beginning to end, works to correct us.

This intention becomes still more evident if we examine in detail one of his dialogues and one of his pictures. You will not find there the impartial energy, bent on copying nature, but the attentive thoughtfulness, bent on transforming into satire objects, words, and events. All the words of the character are chosen and weighed, so as to be odious or ridiculous. He accuses himself, is studious to display his vice, and under his voice we hear the voice of the writer who judges, unmasks, and punishes him. Miss Crawley, a rich old woman, falls

ill.[1] Mrs. Bute, her relative, hastens to save her, and to save the inheritance. Her aim is to have excluded from the will a nephew, Captain Rawdon, an old favourite, presumptive heir of the old lady. This Rawdon is a stupid guardsman, a frequenter of hotels, a too clever gambler, a duellist, and a *roué*. Fancy the capital opportunity for Mrs. Bute, the respectable mother of a family, the worthy spouse of a clergyman, accustomed to write her husband's sermons! From sheer virtue she hates Captain Rawdon, and will not suffer that such a good sum of money should fall into such bad hands. Moreover, are we not responsible for our families? and is it not for us to publish the faults of our relatives? It is our strict duty, and Mrs. Bute acquits herself of hers conscientiously. She provides edifying stories of her nephew, and therewith she edifies the aunt. He has ruined so and so; he has wronged such a woman. He has duped this tradesman; he has killed this husband. And above all, unworthy man, he has mocked his aunt! Will that generous lady continue to cherish such a viper? Will she suffer her numberless sacrifices to be repaid by this ingratitude and this ridicule? You can imagine the ecclesiastical eloquence of Mrs. Bute. Seated at the foot of the bed, she keeps the patient in sight, plies her with draughts, enlivens her with terrible sermons, and mounts guard at the door against the probable invasion of the heir. The siege was well conducted, the legacy attacked so obstinately must yield; the virtuous fingers of the matron grasped beforehand and by anticipation the substantial heap of shining sovereigns. And yet a carping spectator might have found some faults in her management. She managed rather too well. She forgot that a woman persecuted with sermons, handled like a bale of goods, regulated like a clock, might take a dislike to so harassing an authority. What is worse, she forgot that a timid old woman, confined in the house, overwhelmed with preachings, poisoned with pills, might die before having changed her will, and leave all, alas, to her scoundrelly nephew. Instructive and notable example! Mrs. Bute, the honour of her sex, the consoler of the sick, the counsellor of her family, having ruined her health to look after her beloved sister-in-law, and to preserve the inheritance, was just on the point, by her exemplary devotion, of putting the patient in her coffin, and the inheritance in the hands of her nephew.

Apothecary Clump arrives; he trembles for his dear client; she is worth to him two hundred a year; he is resolved to save this precious life, in spite of Mrs. Bute. Mrs. Bute interrupts him, and says:

'I am sure, my dear Mr. Clump, no efforts of mine have been wanting to restore our dear invalid, whom the ingratitude of her nephew has laid on the bed of sickness. I never shrink from personal discomfort; I never refuse to sacrifice

[1] *Vanity Fair.* [Unless the large octavo edition is mentioned, the translator has always used the collected edition of Thackeray's works in small octavo, 1855–1868, 14 vols.]

myself. . . . I would lay down my life for my duty, or for any member of my husband's family.'[1]

The disinterested apothecary returns to the charge heroically. Immediately she replies in the finest strain; her eloquence flows from her lips as from an over-full pitcher. She cries aloud:

'Never, as long as nature supports me, will I desert the post of duty. As the mother of a family and the wife of an English clergyman, I humbly trust that my principles are good. When my poor James was in the smallpox, did I allow any hireling to nurse him? No!'

The patient Clump scatters about sugared compliments, and pressing his point amidst interruptions, protestations, offers of sacrifice, railings against the nephew, at last hits the mark. He delicately insinuates that the patient 'should have change, fresh air, gaiety.' 'The sight of her horrible nephew casually in the Park, where I am told the wretch drives with the brazen partner of his crimes,' Mrs. Bute said (letting the cat of selfishness out of the bag of secrecy), 'would cause her such a shock, that we should have to bring her back to bed again. She must not go out, Mr. Clump. She shall not go out as long as I remain to watch over her. And as for *my* health, what matters it? I give it cheerfully, sir. I sacrifice it at the altar of my duty.' It is clear that the author attacks Mrs. Bute and all legacy-hunters. He gives her ridiculous airs, pompous phrases, a transparent, gross, and blustering hypocrisy. The reader feels hatred and disgust for her the more she speaks. He would unmask her; he is pleased to see her assailed, driven in a corner, taken in by the polished manœuvres of her adversary, and rejoices with the author, who tears from her and emphasises the shameful confession of her folly and her greed.

Having arrived so far, satirical reflection quits the literary form. In order the better to develop itself, it exhibits itself alone. Thackeray comes in his proper character to attack vice. No author is more fertile in dissertations; he constantly enters his story to reprimand or instruct us; he adds theoretical to active morality. We might glean from his novels one or two volumes of essays in the manner of La Bruyère or of Addison. There are essays on love, on vanity, on hypocrisy, on meanness, on all the virtues, all the vices; and turning over a few pages, we shall find one on the comedies of legacies, and of too attentive relatives:

'What a dignity it gives an old lady, that balance at the banker's! How tenderly we look at her faults, if she is a relative (and may every reader have a score of such), what a kind, good-natured old creature we find her! How the junior partner of Hobbs and Dobbs leads her smiling to the carriage with the lozenge upon it, and the fat wheezy coachman! How, when she comes to pay us a visit, we generally find an opportunity to let our friends know her station in the world! We say (and with perfect truth) I wish I had Miss Mac Whirter's signature to a cheque for five thousand pounds. She wouldn't miss it, says your wife. She is my aunt, say you, in an easy careless way, when your friend asks if Miss

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. xix.

Mac Whirter is any relative? Your wife is perpetually sending her little testimonies of affection; your little girls work endless worsted baskets, cushions, and foot-stools for her. What a good fire there is in her room when she comes to pay you a visit, although your wife laces her stays without one! The house during her stay assumes a festive, neat, warm, jovial, snug appearance not visible at other seasons. You yourself, dear sir, forget to go to sleep after dinner, and find yourself all of a sudden (though you invariably lose) very fond of a rubber. What good dinners you have—game every day, Malmsey-Madeira, and no end of fish from London! Even the servants in the kitchen share in the general prosperity; and, somehow, during the stay of Miss Mac Whirter's fat coachman, the beer is grown much stronger, and the consumption of tea and sugar in the nursery (where her maid takes her meals) is not regarded in the least. Is it so, or is it not so? I appeal to the middle classes. Ah, gracious powers! I wish you would send me an old aunt—a maiden aunt—an aunt with a lozenge on her carriage, and a front of light coffee-coloured hair—how my children should work workbags for her, and my Julia and I would make her comfortable! Sweet—sweet vision! Foolish—foolish dream!'[1]

There is no disguising it. The reader most resolved not to be warned, is warned. When we have an aunt with a good sum to leave, we shall value our attentions and our tenderness at their true worth. The author has taken the place of our conscience, and the novel, transformed by reflection, becomes a school of manners.

III.

The lash is laid on very heavily in this school; it is the English taste. About tastes and whips there is no disputing; but without disputing we may understand, and the surest means of understanding the English taste is to compare it with the French taste.

I see in France, in a drawing-room of men of wit, or in an artist's studio, a score of lively people: they must be amused, that is their character. You may speak to them of human wickedness, but on condition of diverting them. If you get angry, they will be shocked; if you teach a lesson, they will yawn. Laugh, it is the rule here—not cruelly, or from manifest enmity, but in good humour and in lightness of spirit. This nimble wit must act; for it the discovery of a clean piece of folly is a fortunate hap. As a light flame, it glides and flickers in sudden outbreaks on the mere surface of things. Satisfy it by imitation, and to please gay people be gay. Be polite, that is the second commandment, very like the other. You speak to sociable, delicate, vain men, whom you must take care not to offend, and flatter. You would wound them by trying to carry conviction by force, by dint of solid arguments, by a display of eloquence and indignation. Do them the honour of supposing that they understand you at the first word, that a hinted smile is to them as good as a syllogism established, that a fine allusion caught on the wing reaches them better than the

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. ix.

heavy onset of a gross geometrical satire. Think, lastly (between ourselves), that, in politics as in religion, they have been for a thousand years very well governed, over governed; that when a man is bored he desires to be so no more; that a coat too tight splits at the elbows and elsewhere. They are critics from choice; from choice they like to insinuate forbidden things; and often, by abuse of logic, by transport, by vivacity, from ill humour, they strike at society through government, at morality through religion. They are scholars who have been too long under the rod; they break the windows in opening the doors. I dare not tell you to please them; I simply remark that, in order to please them, a grain of seditious humour will do no harm.

I cross seven leagues of sea, and here I am in a great unadorned hall, with a multitude of benches, with gas burners, swept, orderly, a debating club or a preaching house. There are five hundred long faces, gloomy and subdued;[1] and at the first glance it is clear that they are not there to amuse themselves. In this land a grosser mood, overcharged with a heavier and stronger nourishment, has deprived impressions of their flat mobility, and thought, less facile and prompt, has lost its vivacity and its gaiety. If you rail before them, think that you are speaking to attentive, concentrated men, capable of durable and profound sensations, incapable of changeable and sudden emotion. Those immobile and contracted faces will preserve the same attitude; they resist fleeting and half-formed smiles; they cannot unbend; and their laughter is a convulsion as stiff as their gravity. Do not skim over your subject, lay stress upon it; do not pass over it lightly, impress it; do not dally, but strike; reckon that you must vehemently move vehement passions, and that shocks are needed to set these nerves in motion. Reckon also that your hearers are practical minds, lovers of the useful; that they come here to be taught; that you owe them solid truths; that their common sense, somewhat contracted, does not fall in with hazardous extemporisations or doubtful hints; that they demand worked out refutations and complete explanations; and that if they have paid to come in, it was to hear advice which they might apply, and satire founded on proof. Their mood requires strong emotions; their mind asks for precise demonstrations. To satisfy their mood, you must not touch the surface, but torture vice; to satisfy their mind, you must not rail in sallies, but by arguments. One word more: down there, in the midst of the assembly, behold that gilded, splendid book, resting royally on a velvet cushion. It is the Bible; about it there are fifty moralists, who a while ago met at the theatre and pelted an actor off the stage with apples, who was guilty of having the wife of a townsman for his mistress. If with your finger-tip, with all the compliments and disguises in the world, you touch a single sacred leaf, or

[1] Thackeray, in his *Book of Snobs*, says: 'Their usual English expression of intense gloom and subdued agony.'

the least moral conventionalism, immediately fifty hands on your coat collar will put you out of the door. With Englishmen you must be English, with their passion and their common sense adopt their leading-strings. Thus confined to recognised truths, your satire will become more bitter, and will add the weight of public belief to the pressure of logic and the force of indignation.

IV.

No writer was better gifted than Thackeray for this kind of satire, because no faculty is more proper to satire than reflection. Reflection is a concentrated attention, and concentrated attention increases a hundredfold the force and duration of emotions. He who is immersed in the contemplation of a vice feels a hatred of vice, and the intensity of his hatred is measured by the intensity of his contemplation. At first anger is a generous wine, which intoxicates and exalts; when preserved and shut up, it becomes a liquor burning all that it touches, and corroding even the vessel which contains it. Of all satirists, Thackeray, after Swift, is the most gloomy. Even his countrymen have reproached him with depicting the world uglier than it is. Indignation, grief, scorn, disgust, are his ordinary sentiments. When he digresses, and imagines tender souls, he exaggerates their sensibility, in order to render their oppression more odious. The selfishness which wounds them appears horrible, and this resigned sweetness is a mortal insult to their tyrants: it is the same hatred which has calculated the kindliness of the victims and the harshness of the persecutors.

This anger, exasperated by reflection, is also armed by reflection. It is clear that the author is not carried away by passing indignation or pity. He has mastered himself before speaking. He has often weighed the rascality which he is about to describe. He is in possession of the motives, species, results, as a naturalist is of his classifications. He is sure of his judgment, and has matured it. He punishes like a man convinced, who has before him a heap of proofs, who advances nothing without a document or an argument, who has foreseen all objections and refuted all excuses, who will never pardon, who is right in being inflexible, who is conscious of his justice, and who rests his sentence and his vengeance on all the powers of meditation and equity. The effect of this justified and contained hatred is overwhelming. When we have read to the end of Balzac's novels, we feel the pleasure of a naturalist walking through a museum, past a fine collection of specimens and monstrosities. When we have read to the end of Thackeray, we feel the shudder of a stranger brought before a mattress in the operating-room of an hospital, on the day when moxas are applied or a limb is taken off.

In such a case the most natural weapon is serious irony, because it bears witness to a concentrated hate: he who employs it suppresses his first movement; he feigns to be speaking against himself, and con-

strains himself to take the part of his adversary. On the other hand, this painful and voluntary attitude is the sign of an excessive scorn; the apparent protection lent to his enemy is the worst of insults. The author seems to say: 'I am ashamed to attack you; you are so weak that, even supported, you must fall; your reasonings are your shame, and your excuses are your condemnation.' Thus the more serious the irony, the stronger it is; the more you take care to defend your adversary, the more you degrade him; the more you seem to aid him, the more you crush him. This is why Swift's grave sarcasm is so terrible; we think he is showing respect, and he slays; his approbation is a flagellation. Amongst Swift's pupils, Thackeray is the first. Several chapters in the *Book of Snobs*—that, for instance, on literary snobs—are worthy of *Gulliver*. The author has been passing in review all the snobs of England; what will he say of his colleagues, the literary snobs? Will he dare to speak of them? Certainly:

'My dear and excellent querist, whom does the Schoolmaster flog so resolutely as his own son? Didn't Brutus chop his offspring's head off? You have a very bad opinion indeed of the present state of Literature and of literary men, if you fancy that any one of us would hesitate to stick a knife into his neighbour penman, if the latter's death could do the State any service.

'But the fact is, that in the literary profession there are no Snobs. Look round at the whole body of British men of letters, and I defy you to point out among them a single instance of vulgarity, or envy, or assumption.

'Men and women, as far as I have known them, they are all modest in their demeanour, elegant in their manners, spotless in their lives, and honourable in their conduct to the world and to each other. You *may* occasionally, it is true, hear one literary man abusing his brother; but why? Not in the least out of malice; not at all from envy; merely from a sense of truth and public duty. Suppose, for instance, I good-naturedly point out a blemish in my friend *Mr. Punch's* person, and say *Mr. P.* has a hump-back, and his nose and chin are more crooked than those features in the Apollo or Antinous, which we are accustomed to consider as our standards of beauty; does this argue malice on my part towards *Mr. Punch?* Not in the least. It is the critic's duty to point out defects as well as merits, and he invariably does his duty with the utmost gentleness and candour. . . .

'That sense of equality and fraternity amongst Authors has always struck me as one of the most amiable characteristics of the class. It is because we know and respect each other, that the world respects us so much; that we hold such a good position in society, and demean ourselves so irreproachably when there.

'Literary persons are held in such esteem by the nation, that about two of them have been absolutely invited to Court during the present reign; and it is probable that towards the end of the season, one or two will be asked to dinner by Sir Robert Peel.

'They are such favourites with the public, that they are continually obliged to have their pictures taken and published; and one or two could be pointed out, of whom the nation insists upon having a fresh portrait every year. Nothing can be more gratifying than this proof of the affectionate regard which the people has for its instructors.

'Literature is held in such honour in England, that there is a sum of near

twelve hundred pounds per annum set apart to pension deserving persons following that profession. And a great compliment this is, too, to the professors, and a proof of their generally prosperous and flourishing condition. They are generally so rich and thrifty, that scarcely any money is wanted to help them.'[1]

We are tempted to make a mistake; and to comprehend this passage, we must remember that, in an aristocratical and monarchical society, amidst money-worship and adoration of rank, poor and vulgar talent is treated as its vulgarity and poverty deserve.[2] What makes these ironies yet stronger, is their length; some are prolonged during a whole tale, like the *Fatal Boots*. A Frenchman could not keep up a sarcasm so long. It would escape right or left through various emotions; it would change countenance, and would not preserve so fixed an attitude—the mark of such a decided animosity, so calculated and bitter. There are characters which Thackeray develops through three volumes—Blanche Amory, Rebecca Sharp—and of whom he never speaks but with insult, both are base, and he never introduces them without plying them with tendernesses: dear Rebecca! tender Blanche! The tender Blanche is a sentimental and literary young creature, obliged to live with her parents, who do not understand her. She suffers so much, that she ridicules them aloud before everybody; she is so oppressed by the folly of her mother and father-in-law, that she never omits an opportunity of making them feel their folly. In good conscience, could she do otherwise? Would it not be on her part a lack of sincerity to affect a gaiety which she has not, or a respect which she cannot feel? We understand that the poor child is in need of sympathy. When she gave up her dolls, this loving heart became first enamoured of Trenmor, a high-souled convict, the fiery Sténio, Prince Djalma, and other heroes of French novels. Alas! the imaginary world is not sufficient for wounded souls, and the craving for the ideal, for satiety, falls at last to worldly beings. At eleven years of age Miss Blanche had felt tender emotions towards a little Savoyard, an organ-grinder at Paris, whom she persisted in believing to be a prince carried off from his parents; at twelve an old and hideous drawing-master had agitated her young heart; at Madame de Caramel's boarding-school a correspondence by letter took place with two young pupils of the college of Charlemagne. Dear forlorn girl, her delicate feet are already wounded by the briars in her path of life; every day her illusions shed their leaves, and in vain she confides them to verse, in a little book bound in blue velvet, with a clasp of gold, entitled *Mes Larmes*. In this isolation, what is she to do? She grows enthusiastic over the young ladies whom she meets, feels a magnetic attraction at sight of them, becomes their sister, except that she casts

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, ch. xvi.; *on Literary Snobs*.

[2] Stendhal says: 'L'esprit et le génie perdent vingt-cinq pour cent de leur valeur en abordant en Angleterre.'

them aside to-morrow like an old dress: we cannot command our feelings, and nothing is more beautiful than the natural. Moreover, as the amiable child has much taste, a lively imagination, a poetic inclination for change, she keeps her maid Pincott at work day and night. Like a delicate person, a genuine dilettante and lover of the beautiful, she scolds her for her heavy eyes and her pale face:

'Our muse, with the candour which distinguished her, never failed to remind her attendant of the real state of matters. "I should send you away, Pincott, for you are a great deal too weak, and your eyes are failing you, and you are always crying and snivelling, and wanting the doctor; but I wish that your parents at home should be supported, and I go on enduring for their sake, mind," the dear Blanche would say to her timid little attendant. Or, "Pincott, your wretched appearance and slavish manner, and red eyes, positively give me the migraine; and I think I shall make you wear rouge, so that you may look a little cheerful;" or, "Pincott, I can't bear, even for the sake of your starving parents, that you should tear my hair out of my head in that manner; and I will thank you to write to them and say that I dispense with your services."'[1]

This fool of a Pincott does not appreciate her good fortune. Can one be sad in serving such a superior being as Miss Blanche? What joy to furnish her with subjects for her style! because, to confess the truth, Miss Blanche has not disdained to write 'some very pretty verses about the lonely little tiring-maid, whose heart was far away,' 'sad exile in a foreign land.' Alas! the slightest event suffices to wound this too sensitive heart. At the least emotion her tears flow, her feelings are shaken, like a delicate butterfly, crushed as soon as touched. There she goes, aerial, her eyes fixed on heaven, a faint smile lingering round her rosy lips, a touching fairy, so consoling to all who surround her, that every one wishes her at the bottom of a well.

One step added to serious irony leads us to serious caricature. Here, as before, the author pleads the rights of his neighbour; the only difference is, that he pleads them with too much warmth; it is insult upon insult. Under this head it abounds in Thackeray. Some of his grotesques are outrageous: for instance, M. Alcide de Mirobolant, a French cook, an artist in sauces, who declares his passion to Miss Blanche through the medium of symbolic dishes, and thinks himself a gentleman; Mrs. Major O'Dowd, a sort of female grenadier, the most pompous and bragging of Irishwomen, bent on ruling the regiment, and marrying the bachelors will they nill they; Miss Briggs, an old companion, born to receive insults, to make phrases and shed tears; the Doctor, who proves to his scholars who write bad Greek, that habitual idleness and bad construing lead to the gallows. These calculated deformities only excite a sad smile. We always perceive behind the oddity of the character the sardonic air of the painter, and we conclude that

[1] These remarks are only to be found in the original octavo edition of *Pendennis*.—Tr.

the human race is base and stupid. Other figures, less exaggerated, are not more natural. We see that the author throws them expressly into palpable follies and marked contradictions. Such is Miss Crawley, an old immoral woman and free-thinker, who praises unequal marriages, and falls into a fit when on the next page her nephew makes one; who calls Rebecca Sharp her equal, and at the same time bids her 'put some coals on the fire;' who, on learning the departure of her favourite, cries with despair, 'Gracious goodness, and who's to make my chocolate?' These are comedy scenes, and not pictures of manners. There are twenty such. You see an excellent aunt, Mrs. Hoggarty, of Castle Hoggarty, settling down in the house of her nephew Titmarsh, throw him into vast expenses, persecute his wife, drive away his friends, make his marriage unhappy. The poor ruined fellow is thrown into prison. She denounces him to the creditors with genuine indignation, and reproaches him with perfect sincerity. The wretch has been his aunt's executioner; she has been dragged by him from her home, tyrannised over by him, robbed by him, outraged by his wife. She writes:

'I have seen butter wasted as if it had been dirt, cole flung away, candles burned at both ends; . . . and now you have the audassaty, being placed in prison justly for your crimes, for cheating me of £3000. . . . You come upon me to pay your detts! No, sir, it is quite enough that your mother should go on the parish, and that your wife should sweep the streets, to which you have indeed brought them; *I*, at least . . . have some of the comforts to which my rank entitles me. The furnitur in this house is mine; and as I presume you intend *your lady* to sleep in the streets, I give you warning that I shall remove it all to-morrow. Mr. Smithers will tell you that I had intended to leave you my intire fortune. I have this morning, in his presents, solamly toar up my will, and hereby renounce all connection with you and your beggarly family. *P.S.*—I took a viper into my bosom, *and it stung me.*'[1]

This just and compassionate woman finds her match, a pious man, John Brough, Esquire, M.P., director of the Independent West Diddlesex Fire and Life Insurance Company. This virtuous Christian has sniffed from afar the cheering odour of her lands, houses, stocks, and other landed and personal property. He pounces upon the fine property of Mrs. Hoggarty, is sorry to see that it only brings that lady four per cent., and resolves to double her income. He calls upon her at her lodgings, when her face was shockingly swelled and bitten by—never mind what:

'"Gracious heavens!" shouted John Brough, Esquire, "a lady of your rank to suffer in this way!—the excellent relative of my dear boy, Titmarsh! Never, madam—never let it be said that Mrs. Hoggarty of Castle Hoggarty should be subject to such horrible humiliation, while John Brough has a home to offer her,—a humble, happy Christian home, madam, though unlike, perhaps, the splendour to which you have been accustomed in the course of your distinguished career. Isabella, my love!—Belinda! speak to Mrs. Hoggarty. Tell her that John Brough's house is hers from garret to cellar. I repeat it, madam, from garret to

[1] *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*, ch. xi.

cellar. I desire—I insist—I order, that Mrs. Hoggarty of Castle Hoggarty's trunks should be placed this instant in my carriage!"'[1]

This style raises a laugh, if you will, but a sad laugh. We have just learned that man is a hypocrite, unjust, tyrannical, blind. In our vexation we turn to the author, and we see on his lips only sarcasms, on his brow only chagrin.

V.

Let us look carefully; perhaps in less grave matters we shall find subject of genuine laughter. Let us consider, not a rascality, but a misadventure; rascality revolts, a misadventure might amuse. But amusement alone is not here; even in a diversion the satire retains its force, because reflection retains its intensity. There is in English fun a seriousness, an effort, an application that is marvellous, and their comicalities are composed with as much science as their sermons. The powerful attention decomposes its object in all its parts, and reproduces it with illusive detail and relief. Swift describes the land of speaking horses, the politics of Lilliput, the inventors of the Flying Island, with details as precise and harmonious as an experienced traveller, an exact inquirer into manners and countries. Thus supported, the impossible monster and the literary grotesque enter upon actual existence, and the phantom of the imagination takes the consistency of objects which we touch. Thackeray introduces this imperturbable gravity, this solid conception, this talent for illusion, into his farce. Study one of his moral essays; he wishes to prove that in the world we must conform to received customs, and transforms this commonplace into an Oriental anecdote. Reckon up the details of manners, geography, chronology, cookery, the mathematical designation of every object, person, and gesture, the lucidity of imagination, the profusion of local truths; you will understand why his raillery produces so original and biting an impression, and you will find here the same degree of studiousness and the same attentive energy as in the foregoing ironies and exaggerations: his enjoyment is as reflective as his hatred; he has changed his attitude, not his faculty:

'I am naturally averse to egotism, and hate self-laudation consumedly; but I can't help relating here a circumstance illustrative of the point in question, in which I must think I acted with considerable prudence.

'Being at Constantinople a few years since—(on a delicate mission)—the Russians were playing a double game, between ourselves, and it became necessary on our part to employ an *extra negotiator*—Leckerbiss Pasha of Roumelia, then Chief Galeongee of the Porte, gave a diplomatic banquet at his summer palace at Bujukdere. I was on the left of the Galeongee; and the Russian agent Count de Diddloff on his dexter side. Diddloff is a dandy who would die of a rose in aromatic pain: he had tried to have me assassinated three times in the course of the negotiations: but of course we were friends in public, and saluted each other in the most cordial and charming manner.

[1] *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*, ch. ix.

'The Galeongee is—or was, alas! for a bow-string has done for him—a staunch supporter of the old school of Turkish politics. We dined with our fingers, and had flaps of bread for plates; the only innovation he admitted was the use of European liquors, in which he indulged with great gusto. He was an enormous eater. Amongst the dishes a very large one was placed before him of a lamb dressed in its wool, stuffed with prunes, garlic, assafœtida, capsicums, and other condiments, the most abominable mixture that ever mortal smelt or tasted. The Galeongee ate of this hugely; and pursuing the Eastern fashion, insisted on helping his friends right and left, and when he came to a particularly spicy morsel, would push it with his own hands into his guests' very mouths.

'I never shall forget the look of poor Diddloff, when his Excellency, rolling up a large quantity of this into a ball, and exclaiming, "Buk Buk" (it is very good), administered the horrible bolus to Diddloff. The Russian's eyes rolled dreadfully as he received it: he swallowed it with a grimace that I thought must precede a convulsion, and seizing a bottle next him, which he thought was Sauterne, but which turned out to be French brandy, he drank off nearly a pint before he knew his error. It finished him; he was carried away from the dining-room almost dead, and laid out to cool in a summer-house on the Bosphorus.

'When it came to my turn, I took down the condiment with a smile, said "Bismillah," licked my lips with easy gratification, and when the next dish was served, made up a ball myself so dexterously, and popped it down the old Galeongee's mouth with so much grace, that his heart was won. Russia was put out of Court at once, *and the treaty* of Kabobanople *was signed*. As for Diddloff, all was over with *him*, he was recalled to St. Petersburg, and Sir Roderick Murchison saw him, under the No. 3967, working in the Ural mines.[1]

The anecdote is evidently authentic; and when De Foe related the apparition of Mrs. Veal, he did not better imitate the style of an authenticated account.

VI.

So attentive a reflection is a source of sadness. To amuse ourselves with human passions, we must consider them as inquisitive men, like shifting puppets, or as learned men, like regulated wheels, or as artists, like powerful springs. If you only consider them as virtuous or vicious, your lost illusions will enchain you in gloomy thoughts, and you will find in man only weakness and ugliness. This is why Thackeray depreciates our whole nature. He does as a novelist what Hobbes does as a philosopher. Almost everywhere, when he describes fine sentiments, he derives them from an ugly source. Tenderness, kindness, love, are in his characters the effect of the nerves, of instinct, or of a moral disease. Amelia Sedley, his favourite, and one of his masterpieces, is a poor little woman, snivelling, incapable of reflection and decision, blind, a superstitious adorer of a coarse and selfish husband, always sacrificed by her own will and fault, whose love is made up of folly and weakness, often unjust, accustomed to see falsely, and more worthy of compassion than respect. Lady Castlewood, so good and tender, is enamoured, like Amelia, of a drunken and imbecile boor; and

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, ch. i.; *The Snob playfully dealt with.*

her wild jealousy, exasperated on the slightest suspicion, implacable against her husband, giving utterance violently to cruel words, shows that her love comes not from virtue, but from mood. Helen Pendennis, the model of mothers, is a somewhat silly country prude, of narrow education, also jealous, and having in her jealousy all the harshness of Puritanism and passion. She faints on learning that her son has a mistress: it is 'such a sin, such a dreadful sin. I can't bear to think that my boy should commit such a crime. I wish he had died, almost, before he had done it.'[1] Whenever she is spoken to of little Fanny, 'the widow's countenance, always soft and gentle, assumed a cruel and inexorable expression.'[2] Meeting Fanny at the bedside of the sick young man, she drives her away as if she were a prostitute and a servant. Maternal love, in her as in the others, is an incurable blindness: her son is her idol; in her adoration she finds the means of making his lot insupportable, and himself unhappy. As to the love of the men for the women, if we judge from the pictures of the author, we can but feel pity for it, and look on it as ridiculous. At a certain age, according to Thackeray, nature speaks: we meet some woman; a fool or not, good or bad, we adore her; it is a fever. At the age of six months dogs have their disease; man has his at twenty. If a man loves, it is not because the lady is loveable, but because he must love. Do you think one would drink if not thirsty, or eat if not hungry?

He relates the history of this hunger and thirst with a bitter vigour. He seems like a man grown sober, railing at drunkenness. He explains at length, in a half sarcastic tone, the folly of Major Dobbin for Amelia; how the Major buys bad wines from her father; how he urges the postilions, rouses the servants, persecutes his friends, to see Amelia more quickly; how, after ten years of sacrifices, tenderness, and services, he sees that he is held second to an old portrait of a faithless, coarse, selfish, and dead husband. The saddest of these accounts is that of the first love of Pendennis—Miss Fotheringay, the actress, whom he loves, a matter-of-fact person, a good housekeeper, who has the mind and the education of a kitchen-maid. She speaks to the young man of the fine weather, and the pie she has just been making: Pendennis discovers in these two phrases a wonderful depth of intellect and a superhuman majesty of devotion. He asks Miss Fotheringay, who has just been playing Ophelia, if the latter loved Hamlet. Miss Fotheringay answers:

'"In love with such a little ojous wretch as that stunted manager of a Bingley?" She bristled with indignation at the thought. Pen explained it was not of her he spoke, but of Ophelia of the play. "Oh, indeed; if no offence was meant, none was taken: but as for Bingley, indeed, she did not value him—not that glass of punch." Pen next tried her on Kotzebue. "Kotzebue? who was he?" "The author of the play in which she had been performing so admirably." "She did not know that—the man's name at the beginning of the book was Thompson," she said. Pen laughed at her adorable simplicity. Pendennis, Pendennis—how she

[1] *Pendennis*, ch. liv. [2] *Ibid.* ch. lii.

spoke the words! Emily, Emily! how good, how noble, how beautiful, how perfect she is!'[1]

The first volume runs wholly upon this contrast; it seems as though Thackeray said to his reader: 'My dear brothers in humanity, we are rascals forty-nine days in fifty; in the fiftieth, if we escape pride, vanity, wickedness, selfishness, it is because we fall into a hot fever; our folly causes our devotion.'

VII.

Yet, short of being Swift, one must love something; one cannot always be wounding and destroying; and the heart, wearied of scorn and hate, needs repose in praise and emotion. Moreover, to blame a fault is to laud the contrary quality; and a man cannot sacrifice a victim without raising an altar: it is circumstance which fixes on the one, and which builds the other; and the moralist who combats the dominant vice of his country and his age, preaches the virtue contrary to the vice of his age and his country. In an aristocratical and commercial society, this vice is selfishness and pride! Thackeray will therefore extol sweetness and tenderness. Let love and kindness be blind, instinctive, unreasoning, ridiculous, it matters little: such as they are, he adores them; and there is no more singular contrast than that of his heroes and of his admiration. He creates foolish women, and kneels before them; the artist within him contradicts the commentator: the first is ironical, the second laudatory; the first represents the pettiness of love, the second writes its panegyric; the top of the page is a satire in action, the bottom is a dithyramb in periods. The compliments which he lavishes on Amelia Sedley, Helen Pendennis, Laura, are infinite; no author ever more visibly and incessantly paid court to his women; he sacrifices men to them, not once, but a hundred times:

'Very likely female pelicans like so to bleed under the selfish little beaks of their young ones: it is certain that women do. There must be some sort of pleasure which we men don't understand, which accompanies the pain of being scarified.[2] . . . Do not let us men despise these instincts because we cannot feel them. These women were made for our comfort and delectation, gentlemen,—with all the rest of the minor animals.[3] . . . Be it for a reckless husband, a dissipated son, a darling scapegrace of a brother, how ready their hearts are to pour out their best treasures for the benefit of the cherished person; and what a deal of this sort of enjoyment are we, on our side, ready to give the soft creatures! There is scarce a man that reads this, but has administered pleasure in that fashion to his womankind, and has treated them to the luxury of forgiving him.'[4]

When he enters the room of a good mother, or of a young honest girl,

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[1] *Pendennis*, ch. v.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xxi. This passage is only found in the large octavo edition.—Tr.

[3] *Ibid.* ch. xxi.

[4] *Ibid.* ch. xxi., large octavo edition. These words are not in the small octavo edition.—Tr.

he casts down his eyes as on the threshold of a sanctuary. In the presence of Laura resigned, pious, he checks himself:

'And as that duty was performed quite noiselessly—while the supplications which endowed her with the requisite strength for fulfilling it, also took place in her own chamber, away from all mortal sight,—we, too, must be perforce silent about these virtues of hers, which no more bear public talking about than a flower will bear to bloom in a ball-room.'[1]

Like Dickens, he has a reverence for the family, tender and simple sentiments, calm and pure contentments, such as are relished by the fireside between a child and a wife. When this misanthrope, so reflective and harsh, lights upon a filial effusion or a maternal grief, he is wounded in a sensitive place, and, like Dickens, he makes us weep.[2]

We have enemies because we have friends, and aversions because we have preferences. If we prefer devoted kindliness and tender affections, we dislike arrogance and harshness: the cause of love is also the cause of hate; and sarcasm, like sympathy, is the criticism of a social form and a public vice. This is why Thackeray's novels are a war against aristocracy. Like Rousseau, he praised simple and affectionate manners; like Rousseau, he hates the distinction of ranks.

He wrote a whole book on this, a sort of moral and half political pamphlet, the *Book of Snobs*. The word does not exist in France, because they have not the thing. The snob is a child of aristocratical societies: perched on his step of the long ladder, he respects the man on the step above him, and despises the man on the step below, without inquiring what they are worth, solely on account of their position; in his innermost heart he finds it natural to kiss the boots of the first, and to kick the second. Thackeray reckons up at length the degrees of this habit. Hear his conclusion:

'I can bear it no longer—this diabolical invention of gentility, which kills natural kindliness and honest friendship. Proper pride, indeed! Rank and precedence, forsooth! The table of ranks and degrees is a lie and should be flung into the fire. Organise rank and precedence! that was well for the masters of ceremonies of former ages. Come forward, some great marshal, and organise Equality in society.'

Then he adds, with common sense, altogether English bitterness and familiarity:

'If ever our cousins the Smigsmags asked me to meet Lord Longears, I would like to take an opportunity after dinner, and say, in the most good-natured way in the world:—Sir, Fortune makes you a present of a number of thousand pounds every year. The ineffable wisdom of our ancestors has placed you as a chief and hereditary legislator over me. Our admirable Constitution (the pride of Britons and envy of surrounding nations) obliges me to receive you as my senator, superior,

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[1] *Pendennis*, ch. li.

[2] See, for example, in the *Great Hoggarty Diamond*, the death of the little child. The *Book of Snobs* ends thus: 'Fun is good, Truth is still better, and Love best of all.'

and guardian. Your eldest son, Fitz-Heehaw, is sure of a place in Parliament; your younger sons, the De Brays, will kindly condescend to be post-captains and lieutenant-colonels, and to represent us in foreign courts, or to take a good living when it falls convenient. These prizes our admirable Constitution (the pride and envy of, etc.) pronounces to be your due; without count of your dulness, your vices, your selfishness; of your entire incapacity and folly. Dull as you may be (and we have as good a right to assume that my lord is an ass, as the other proposition, that he is an enlightened patriot);—dull, I say, as you may be, no one will accuse you of such monstrous folly, as to suppose that you are indifferent to the good luck which you possess, or have any inclination to part with it. No—and patriots as we are, under happier circumstances, Smith and I, I have no doubt, were we dukes ourselves, would stand by our order.

'We would submit good-naturedly to sit in a high place. We would acquiesce in that admirable Constitution (pride and envy of, etc.) which made us chiefs and the world our inferiors; we would not cavil particularly at that notion of hereditary superiority which brought so many simple people cringing to our knees. May be we would rally round the Corn-Laws; we would make a stand against the Reform Bill; we would die rather than repeal the acts against Catholics and Dissenters; we would, by our noble system of class-legislation, bring Ireland to its present admirable condition.

'But Smith and I are not Earls as yet. We don't believe that it is for the interest of Smith's army, that young De Bray should be a Colonel at five-and-twenty, of Smith's diplomatic relations, that Lord Longears should go ambassador to Constantinople,—of our politics, that Longears should put his hereditary foot into them.

'This booing and cringing Smith believes to be the act of Snobs; and he will do all in his might and main to be a Snob, and to submit to Snobs no longer. To Longears he says, "We can't help seeing, Longears, that we are as good as you. We can spell even better; we can think quite as rightly; we will not have you for our master, or black your shoes any more."'[1]

This opinion of politics only continues the remarks of the moralist. If he hates aristocracy, it is less because it oppresses man than because it corrupts him; in deforming social life, it deforms private life; in establishing injustice, it establishes vice; after having forestalled the common weal, it poisons the soul; and Thackeray finds its trace in the perversity and foolishness of all classes and all sentiments.

The king opens this list of vengeful portraits. It is George IV., 'the first gentleman in Europe.' This great monarch, so justly regretted, could cut out a coat, drive a four-in-hand nearly as well as the Brighton coachman, and play the fiddle well. 'In the vigour of youth and the prime force of his invention, he invented Maraschino punch, a shoe-buckle, and a Chinese pavilion, the most hideous building in the world:'

'Two boys had leave from their loyal masters to go from Slaughter House School where they were educated, and to appear on Drury Lane stage, amongst a crowd which assembled there to greet the king. THE KING? There he was. Beef-eaters were before the august box: the Marquis of Steyne (Lord of the Powder Closet) and other great officers of state were behind the chair on which he

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, last chapter.

sate, *He* sate—florid of face, portly of person, covered with orders, and in a rich curling head of hair—How we sang God save him! How the house rocked and shouted with that magnificent music. How they cheered, and cried, and waved handkerchiefs. Ladies wept: mothers clasped their children: some fainted with emotion. . . . Yes, we saw him. Fate cannot deprive us of *that*. Others have seen Napoleon. Some few still exist who have beheld Frederick the Great, Doctor Johnson, Marie Antoinette, etc.—be it our reasonable boast to our children, that we saw George the Good, the Magnificent, the Great.'[1]

Dear prince! the virtue emanating from his heroic throne spread through the hearts of all his courtiers. Whoever presented a better example than the Marquis of Steyne? This lord, a king in his own sphere, tried to prove that he was so. He forces his wife to sit at table beside women without any character, his mistresses. Like a true prince, he had for his special enemy his eldest son, presumptive heir to the marquisate, whom he leaves to starve, and compels to run into debt. He is now making love to a charming person, Mrs. Rebecca Crawley, whom he loves for her hypocrisy, coolness, and unequalled insensibility. The Marquis, by dint of debasing and oppressing all who surround him, ends by hating and despising men; he has no taste for anything but perfect rascalities. Rebecca rouses him; one day even she transports him with enthusiasm. She plays Clytemnestra in a charade, and her husband Agamemnon; she advances to the bed, a dagger in her hand; her eyes are lighted up with a smile so ghastly, that people quake as they look at her; Brava! brava! old Steyne's strident voice was heard roaring over all the rest, 'By ——, she'd do it too!' One can hear that he has the true conjugal feeling. His conversation is remarkably frank. 'I can't send Briggs away,' Becky said.—'You owe her her wages, I suppose,' said the peer.—'Worse than that, I have ruined her.'—'Ruined her? then why don't you turn her out?'

He is, moreover, an accomplished gentleman, of fascinating sweetness; he treats his women like a pacha, and his words are like blows. I commend to the reader the domestic scene in which he gives the order to invite Mrs. Crawley. Lady Gaunt, his daughter-in-law, says that she will not be present at dinner, and will go home. His lordship answered:

'I wish you would, and stay there. You will find the bailiffs at Bareacres very pleasant company, and I shall be freed from lending money to your relations, and from your own damned tragedy airs. Who are you to give orders here? You have no money. You've got no brains. You were here to have children, and you have not had any. Gaunt's tired of you; and George's wife is the only person in the family who doesn't wish you were dead. Gaunt would marry again if you were. . . . You, forsooth, must give yourself airs of virtue. . . . Pray, madame, shall I tell you some little anecdotes about my Lady Bareacres, your mamma?'[2]

The rest is in the same style. His daughters-in-law, driven to despair,

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. xlviii. This passage is only found in the original octavo edition.—TR.

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xlix.

say they wish they were dead. This declaration rejoices him, and he concludes with these words: 'This Temple of Virtue belongs to me. And if I invite all Newgate or all Bedlam here, by —, they shall be welcome.' The habit of despotism makes despots, and the best means of implanting despots in families, is to preserve nobles in the State.

Let us take rest in the contemplation of the country gentleman. The innocence of the fields, hereditary respect, family traditions, the pursuit of agriculture, the exercise of local magistracy, must have produced these upright and sensible men, full of kindness and probity, protectors of their county, and servants of their country. Sir Pitt Crawley is a model; he has four thousand a year and two parliamentary boroughs. It is true that these are rotten boroughs, and that he sells the second for fifteen hundred a year. He is an excellent economist, and shears his farmers so close that he can only find bankrupt-tenants. A coach proprietor, a government contractor, a mine proprietor, he pays his subordinates so badly, and is so niggard in outlay, that his mines 'are filled with water; and as for his coach-horses, every mail proprietor in the kingdom knew that he lost more horses than any man in the country;' the Government flung his contract of damaged beef upon his hands. A popular man, he always prefers the society of a horse-dealer to the company of a gentleman. 'He was fond of drink, of swearing, of joking with the farmers' daughters; . . . would cut his joke and drink his glass with a tenant, and sell him up the next day; or have his laugh with the poacher he was transporting with equal good humour.' He speaks with a country accent, has the mind of a lackey, the habits of a boor. At table, waited on by three men and a butler, on massive silver, he inquires into the dishes, and the beasts which have furnished them. 'What *ship* was it, Horrocks, and when did you kill?' 'One of the black-faced Scotch, Sir Pitt: we killed on Thursday.' 'Who took any?' 'Steel of Mudbury took the saddle and two legs, Sir Pitt; but he says the last was too young and confounded woolly, Sir Pitt.' 'What became of the shoulders?' The dialogue goes on in the same tone; after the Scotch mutton comes the black Kentish pig: these animals might be Sir Pitt's family, so much is he interested in them. As for his daughters, he lets them stray to the gardener's cottage, where they pick up their education. As for his wife, he beats her from time to time. As for his people, he exacts the last farthing of the money they owe him. 'A farthing a day is seven shillings a year; seven shillings a year is the interest of seven guineas. Take care of your farthings, old Tinker, and your guineas will come quite nat'ral.' 'He never gave away a farthing in his life,' growled Tinker. 'Never, and never will: it's against my principle.' He is impudent, brutal, coarse, stingy, shrewd, extravagant; but is courted by ministers, and a high-sheriff; honoured, powerful, he rolls in a gilded carriage, and is one of the pillars of the State.

These are the rich; probably money has corrupted them. Let us

look for a poor aristocrat, free from temptations; his lofty soul, left to itself, will display all its native beauty. Sir Francis Clavering is in this case. He has played, drunk, and supped until he has nothing more left. Transactions at the gambling table had speedily effected his ruin; he had been forced to sell out; had shown the white feather, and after frequenting all the billiard-rooms in Europe, been thrown into prison by his uncourteous creditors. To get out he has married a good Indian widow, who outrages spelling, and whose money was left her by her father, a disreputable old lawyer and indigo-smuggler. Clavering ruins her, goes on his knees to obtain gold and pardon, swears on the Bible to contract no more debts, and when he goes out runs straight to the money-lender. Of all the rascals that novelists have ever exhibited, he is the basest. He has neither resolution nor common sense; he is simply a man in a state of dissolution. He swallows insults like water, weeps, begs pardon, and begins again. He debases himself, prostrates himself, and the next moment swears and storms, to fall back into the depths of the extremest cowardice. He implores, threatens, and in the same quarter of an hour accepts the threatened man as his intimate confidant and friend:

'Now, ain't it hard that she won't trust me with a single tea-spoon; ain't it ungentlemanlike, Altamont? You know my lady's of low birth—that is—I beg your pardon—hem—that is, it's most cruel of her not to show more confidence in me. And the very servants begin to laugh—the dam scoundrels! . . . They don't answer my bell; and—and my man was at Vauxhall last night with one of my dress shirts and my velvet waistcoat on, I know it was mine—the confounded impudent blackguard!—and he went on dancing before my eyes, confound him! I'm sure he'll live to be hanged—he deserves to be hanged—all those infernal rascals of valets!'[1]

His conversation is a compound of oaths, whines, and ravings; he is not a man, but a wreck of a man: there survive in him but the discordant remains of vile passions, like the fragments of a crushed snake, which, unable to bite, bruise themselves and wriggle about in their slaver and mud. The sight of a bank-note makes him launch blindly into a mass of entreaties and lies. The future has disappeared for him; he sees but the present. He will sign a bill for twenty pounds at three months to get a sovereign. His brutishness has become imbecility; his eyes are shut; he does not see that his protestations excite mistrust, that his lies excite disgust, that by his very baseness he loses the fruit of his baseness; so that when he comes in, one feels a violent inclination to take the honourable baronet, the member of parliament, the proud inhabitant of a historic house, by the neck, and pitch him, like a basket of rubbish, from the top of the stairs to the bottom.

We must stop. A volume would not exhaust the list of perfections which Thackeray discovers in the English aristocracy. The Marquis

[1] *Pendennis*, ch. lx.

of Farintosh, twenty-fifth of his name, an illustrious fool, healthy and self-contented, whom all the women ogle and all the men bow to; Lady Kew, an old woman of the world, tyrannical and corrupted, at enmity with her daughter, and a match-maker; Sir Barnes Newcome, one of the most cowardly of men, the wickedest, the falsest, the best abused and beaten who has ever smiled in a drawing-room or spoken in Parliament. I see only one estimable character, and he is indistinct—Lord Kew, who, after many follies and excesses, is touched by his Puritan old mother, and repents. But these portraits are sweet compared to the dissertations; the commentator is still more bitter than the artist; he wounds more in speaking than in making his personages speak. You must read his biting diatribes against marriages of convenience, and the sacrifice of girls; against the inequality of inheritance and the envy of younger sons; against the education of the nobles, and their traditionary insolence; against the purchase of commissions in the army. the isolation of classes, the outrages on nature and family, invented by society and law. Behind this, philosophy shows a second gallery of portraits as insulting as the first: for inequality, having corrupted the great men whom it exalts, corrupts the small men whom it degrades; and the spectacle of envy or baseness in the small, is as ugly as that of insolence or despotism in the great. According to Thackeray, English society is a compound of flatteries and intrigues, each striving to hoist himself up a step higher on the social ladder and to push back those who are climbing. To be received at court, to see one's name in the papers amongst a list of illustrious guests, to give a cup of tea at home to some stupid and bloated peer; such is the supreme limit of human ambition and felicity. For one master there are always a hundred lackeys. Major Pendennis, a resolute man, cool and clever, has contracted this leprosy. His happiness to-day is to bow to a lord. He is only at peace in a drawing-room, or in a park of the aristocracy. He craves to be treated with that humiliating condescension wherewith the great overwhelm their inferiors. He pockets lack of attention with ease, and dines graciously at a noble board, where he is invited twice in three years to stop a gap. He leaves a man of genius or a witty woman to converse with a titled sheep or a tipsy lord. He prefers being tolerated at a Marquess' to being respected at a commoner's. Having exalted these fine dispositions into principles, he inculcates them on his nephew, whom he loves, and to push him on in the world, offers him in marriage a basely acquired fortune and the daughter of a convict. Others glide through the proud drawing-rooms, not with parasitic manners, but on account of their splendid balance at the banker's. Once upon a time in France, the nobles with the money of citizens manured their estates; now in England the citizens, by a noble marriage, ennoble their money. For a hundred thousand pounds to the father, Pump, the merchant, marries Lady Blanche Stiff-neck, who, though married, remains my Lady. Naturally he is scorned by her, as a tradesman, and moreover, hated for having made her half a

woman of the people. He dare not see his friends at home; they are too vulgar for his wife. He dare not visit the friends of his wife; they are too high for him. He is his wife's butler, the butt of his father-in-law, the servant of his son, and consoles himself by thinking that his grandsons, when they become Lord Pump, will blush for him and never mention his name.[1] A third means of entering the aristocracy is to ruin oneself, and never see any one. This ingenious method is employed by Mrs. Major Ponto in the country. She has an incomparable governess for her daughters, who thinks that Dante is called Alighieri because he was born at Algiers, but who has educated two marchionesses and a countess.

'Some one wondered we were not enlivened by the appearance of some of the neighbours.—We can't in our position of life, we can't well associate with the attorney's family, as I leave you to suppose—and the Doctor—one may ask one's medical man to one's table, certainly: but his family.—The people in that large red house just outside of the town.—What! the *château-calicot*. That purse-proud ex-linendraper—The parson—Oh! he used to preach in a surplice. He is a Puseyite!'

This sensible Ponto family yawns in solitude for six months, and the rest of the year enjoys the gluttony of the country-squires whom they regale, and the rebuffs of the great lords whom they visit. The son, an officer of the hussars, requires to be kept in luxury so as to be on an equality with his noble comrades, and his tailor receives above three hundred a year out of the nine hundred which make up the whole family income.[2] I should never end, if I recounted all the villanies and miseries which Thackeray attributes to the aristocratic spirit, the division of families, the pride of the ennobled sister, the jealousy of the sister who preserves her condition, the degradation of the characters trained up from school to reverence the little lords, the abasement of the daughters who strive to compass noble marriages, the rage of snubbed vanity, the meanness of the attentions offered, the triumph of folly, the scorn of talent, the consecrated injustice, the heart rendered unnatural, the morals perverted. Before this striking picture of truth and genius, we need remember that this injurious inequality is the cause of a wholesome liberty, that social injustice produces political welfare, that a class of hereditary nobles is a class of hereditary statesmen, that in a century and a half England has had a hundred and fifty years of good government, that in a century and a half France has had a hundred and fifty years of bad government, that all is compensated, and that it is possible to pay dearly for capable leaders, a connected policy, free elections, and the control of the Government by the nation. We must also remember that this talent, founded on intense reflection, concentrated in moral prejudices, could not but have transformed the picture of manners into a systematic

[1] *The Book of Snobs*, ch. viii.; *Great City Snobs.*

[2] *Ibid.* ch. xxvi.; *On some Country Snobs.*

and combative satire, exasperate satire into calculated and implacable animosity, blacken human nature, and become enraged, with studied, redoubled, and natural hatred, against the chief vice of his country and of his time.

§ 2.—The Artist.

VIII.

In literature as well as in politics, we cannot have everything. Talents, like happiness, do not always follow suit. Whatever constitution it selects, a people is always half unhappy; whatever genius he has, a writer is always half impotent. We cannot preserve at once more than a single attitude. To transform the novel is to deform it: he who, like Thackeray, gives to the novel satire for its object, ceases to give it art for its rule, and all the force of the satirist is the weakness of the novelist.

What is a novelist? In my opinion he is a psychologist, who naturally and involuntarily sets psychology at work; he is nothing else, nor more. He loves to picture feelings, to perceive their connections, their precedents, their consequences; and he indulges in this pleasure. In his eyes they are forces, having various directions and magnitudes. About their justice or injustice he troubles himself little. He introduces them in characters, conceives the dominant quality, perceives the traces which this leaves on the others, marks the contrary or harmonious influences of the temperament, of education, of occupation, and labours to manifest the invisible world of inward inclinations and dispositions by the visible world of outward words and actions. To this is his labour reduced. Whatever these bents are, he cares little. A genuine painter sees with pleasure a well-drawn arm and vigorous muscles, even if they be employed in slaying a man. A genuine novelist enjoys the contemplation of the greatness of a harmful sentiment, or the organised mechanism of a pernicious character. He has sympathy with talent, because it is the only faculty which exactly copies nature: occupied in experiencing the emotions of his personages, he only dreams of marking their vigour, kind and mutual action. He represents them to us as they are, whole, not blaming, not punishing, not mutilating; he transfers them to us intact and separate, and leaves to us the right of judging if we desire it. His whole effort is to make them visible, to unravel the types darkened and altered by the accidents and imperfections of real life, to set in relief wide human passions, to be shaken by the greatness of the beings whom he animates, to raise us out of ourselves by the force of his creations. We recognise art in this creative power, impartial and universal as nature, freer and more potent than nature, taking up the rough-drawn or disfigured work of its rival in order to correct its faults and give effect to its conceptions.

All is changed by the intervention of satire; and to begin with

the part of the author. When in pure novel he speaks in his own name, it is to explain a sentiment or mark the cause of a faculty; in satirical novel it is to give us moral advice. It has been seen to how many lessons Thackeray subjects us. That they are good ones no one disputes; but at least they take the place of useful explanations. A third of the volume, being occupied by warnings, is lost to art. Summoned to reflect on our faults, we know the character less. The author designedly neglects a hundred delicate shades which he might have discovered and shown to us. The character, less complete, is less lifelike; the interest, less concentrated, is less lively. Turned away from him instead of brought back to him, our eyes wander and forget him; instead of being absorbed, we are absent in mind. More, and worse, we end by experiencing some degree of weariness. We judge these sermons true, but repeated till we are sick of them. We fancy ourselves listening to college lectures, or handbooks for the use of young priests. We find the like things in gilt books, with pictured covers, given as Christmas presents to children. Are you much rejoiced to learn that marriages of convenience have their inconveniency, that in the absence of a friend we readily speak evil of him, that a son often afflicts his mother by his irregularities, that selfishness is an ugly fault? All this is true; but it is too true. We come to listen to a man in order to hear new things. These old moralities, though useful and well spoken, smack of the paid pedant, so common in England, the clergyman in the white tie, standing bolt upright in his room, and droning for three hundred a year, daily admonition to the young gentlemen whom parents have sent to his educational hothouse.

This studied presence of a moral intention spoils the novel as well as the novelist. It must be confessed, a volume of Thackeray has the cruel misfortune of recalling the novels of Miss Edgeworth or the stories of Canon Schmidt. Here is one which shows us Pendennis proud, extravagant, hare-brained, lazy, shamefully plucked for his examinations; whilst his companions, less intellectual but more studious, took high places in honours, or passed with decent credit. This edifying contrast does not warn us; we do not wish to go back to school; we shut the book, and recommend it like medicine, to our little cousin. Other puerilities, less shocking, end in wearying us just as much. We do not like the prolonged contrast between good Colonel Newcome and his wicked relatives. This Colonel gives money and cakes to every child, money and shawls to all his cousins, money and kind words to all the servants; and these people only answer him with coldness and coarseness. It is clear, from the first page, that the author would persuade us to be affable, and we kick against the too matter-of-course invitation; we don't want to be scolded in a novel; we are in a bad humour with this invasion of pedagogy. We wanted to go to the theatre; we have been taken in by the outside bill, and we growl, *sotto voce*, to find ourselves at a sermon.

Let us console ourselves: the characters suffer as much as we; the author spoils them in preaching to us; they, like us, are sacrificed to satire. He does not animate beings, he lets puppets act. He only combines their actions to make them ridiculous, odious, or disappointing. After a few scenes we recognise the spring, and thenceforth we are always foreseeing when it is going to act. This foresight deprives the character of half its truth, and the reader of half his illusion. Perfect fooleries, complete mischances, unmitigated wickednesses, are rare things. The events and feelings of real life are not so arranged as to make such calculated contrasts and such clever combinations. Nature does not invent these dramatic effects: we soon see that we are before the foot-lights, in front of bedizened actors, whose words are written for them, and their gestures arranged.

To picture exactly this alteration of truth and art, we must compare two characters step by step. There is a personage, unanimously recognised as Thackeray's masterpiece, Becky Sharp, an intrigante and a bad character, but a superior and well-mannered woman. Let us compare her to a similar personage of Balzac, in *les Parents pauvres*, Valérie Marneffe. The difference of the two works will exhibit the difference of the two literatures. As the English excel as moralists and satirists, so the French excel as artists and novelists.

Balzac loves his Valérie; this is why he explains and magnifies her. He does not labour to make her odious, but intelligible. He gives her the education of a prostitute, a 'husband as depraved as a prison full of galley-slaves,' luxurious habits, recklessness, prodigality, womanly nerves, a pretty woman's disgust, an artist's rapture. Thus born and bred, her corruption is natural. She needs elegance as one needs air. She takes it no matter whence, remorselessly, as we drink water from the first stream. She is not worse than her profession; she has all its innate and acquired excuses, of mood, tradition, circumstance, necessity; she has all its powers, *abandon*, graces, mad gaiety, alternatives of triviality and elegance, unmeditated audacity, comical devices, magnificence and success. She is perfect of her kind, like a proud and dangerous horse, which we admire while we fear it. Balzac delights to paint her with no other aim but his picture. He dresses her, lays on for her her patches, arranges her dresses, trembles before her dancing-girl's motions. He details her gestures with as much pleasure and truth as if he were her waiting-woman. His artistic curiosity is fed on the least traits of character and manners. After a violent scene, he pauses at a spare moment, and shows her idle, stretched on her couch like a cat, yawning and basking in the sun. Like a physiologist, he knows that the nerves of the beast of prey are softened, and that it only ceases to bound in order to sleep. But what bounds! She dazzles, fascinates; she defends herself successively against three proved accusations, refutes evidence, alternately humiliates and glorifies herself, rails, adores, demonstrates, changing a score of times her tones

ideas, tricks, in the same quarter of an hour. An old shopkeeper, protected against emotions by trade and avarice, trembles at her speech: 'She sets her feet on my heart, crushes me, stuns me. Ah, what a woman! When she looks cold at me, it is worse than a stomach-ache. . . . How she tripped down the steps, making them bright with her looks!' Everywhere passion, force, atrocity, conceal the ugliness and corruption. Attacked in her fortune by an honest woman, she gets up an incomparable comedy, played with a great poet's eloquence and exaltation, and broken suddenly by the coarse burst of laughter and triviality of a porter's daughter on the stage. Style and action are raised to the height of an epic. 'When the words "Hulot and two hundred thousand francs" were mentioned, Valérie gave a passing look from between her two long eyelids, like the glare of a cannon through its smoke.' A little further, caught in the act by one of her lovers, a Brazilian, and quite capable of killing her, she blenched for an instant; but recovering the same moment, she checked her tears. 'She came to him, and looked so fiercely that her eyes glittered like daggers.' Danger roused and inspired her, and her excited nerves propel genius and courage to her brain. To complete the picture of this impetuous nature, superior and unstable, Balzac at the last moment makes her repent. To proportion her fortune to her vice, he leads her triumphantly through the ruin, death, or despair of twenty people, and shatters her in the supreme moment by a fall as terrible as her success.

Before such passion and logic, what is Becky Sharp? A calculating plotter, cool in temperament, full of common sense, a former governess, having parsimonious habits, a genuine man of business, always proper, always active, unsexed, void of the voluptuous softness and diabolical transport which can give brilliancy to her character and charm to her profession. She is not a prostitute, but a petticoated and heartless barrister. Nothing is more fit to inspire aversion. The author loses no opportunity of expressing his own; for three volumes he pursues her with sarcasms and misfortunes; he puts only false words, perfidious actions, revolting sentiments, in her mouth. From her coming on the stage, at the age of seventeen, treated with rare kindness by a noble family, she lies from morning to night, and by coarse expedients tries to fish there for a husband. The better to crush her, Thackeray himself sets forth all these basenesses, lies, and indecencies. Rebecca ever so gently pressed the hand of fat Joseph:

'It was an advance, and as such, perhaps, some ladies of indisputable correctness and gentility will condemn the action as immodest; but, you see, poor dear Rebecca had all this work to do for herself. If a person is too poor to keep a servant, though ever so elegant, he must sweep his own rooms: if a dear girl has no dear mamma to settle matters with the young man, she must do it for herself.'[1]

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. iv.

A governess at Sir Pitt Crawley's, she gains the friendship of her pupils by reading the tales of Crébillon the younger, and of Voltaire, with them. She writes to her friend Amelia:

'The rector's wife paid me a score of compliments about the progress my pupils made, and thought, no doubt, to touch my heart—poor, simple, country soul! as if I cared a fig about my pupils.'[1]

This phrase is an imprudence hardly natural in so careful a person, and the author adds it to her part, to make it odious. A little further Rebecca is grossly adulatory and mean to old Miss Crawley; and her pompous periods, manifestly false, instead of exciting admiration, raise disgust. She is selfish and lying to her husband, and, knowing that he is on the field of battle, busies herself only in getting together a little purse. Thackeray designedly dwells on the contrast: the heavy dragoon 'went through the various items of his little catalogue of effects, striving to see how they might be turned into money for his wife's benefit, in case any accident should befall him.' 'Faithful to his plan of economy, the captain dressed himself in his oldest and shabbiest uniform' to get killed in:

'And this famous dandy of Windsor and Hyde Park went off on his campaign . . . with something like a prayer on the lips for the woman he was leaving. He took her up from the ground, and held her in his arms for a minute, tight pressed against his strong beating heart. His face was purple and his eyes dim, as he put her down and left her. . . . And Rebecca, as we have said, wisely determined not to give way to unavailing sentimentality on her husband's departure. . . . "What a fright I seem," she said, examining herself in the glass, "and how pale this pink makes one look." So she divested herself of this pink raiment; . . . then she put her bouquet of the ball into a glass of water, and went to bed, and slept very comfortably.'[2]

From these examples judge of the rest. Thackeray's whole business is to degrade Rebecca Sharp. He convicts her of harshness to her son, theft from her tradesmen, imposture against everybody To finish, he makes her a dupe; whatever she does, it comes to nothing. Compromised by the advances which she has lavished on foolish Joseph, she momentarily expects an offer of marriage. A letter comes, announcing that he has gone to Scotland, and presents his compliments to Miss Rebecca. Three months later, she secretly marries Captain Rawdon, a poor dolt. Sir Pitt Crawley, Rawdon's father, throws himself at her feet, with four thousand a year, and offers her his hand. In her consternation she weeps despairingly. 'Married, married, married already!' is her cry; and it is enough to pierce sensitive souls. Later, she tries to win her sister-in-law by passing for a good mother. 'Why do you kiss me here?' asks her son; 'you never kiss me at home.' The consequence is, complete discredit; once more she is lost. The Marquis of Steyne, her lover, presents her to society, loads her

[1] *Vanity Fair*, ch. xi. [2] *Ibid.* ch. xxx.

with jewels, bank-notes, and has her husband appointed to some island in the East. The husband enters at the wrong moment, knocks my lord down, restores the diamonds, and drives her away. Wandering on the Continent, she tries five or six times to grow rich and appear honest. Always, at the moment of success, accident brings her to the ground. Thackeray sports with her, as a child with a cockchafer, letting her hoist herself painfully to the top of the ladder, in order to pluck her down by the foot and make her tumble disgracefully. He ends by dragging her through taverns and greenrooms, and pointing his finger at her from a distance, as a gamester, a drunkard, is unwilling to touch her further. On the last page he installs her vulgarly in a fortune, plundered by doubtful devices, and leaves her in bad odour, uselessly hypocritical, abandoned to the shadiest society. Under this storm of irony and contempt, the heroine is dwarfed, illusion is weakened, interest diminished, art attenuated, poetry disappears, and the character, more useful, has become less true and beautiful.

IX.

Suppose that a happy chance lays aside these causes of weakness, and keeps open these sources of talent. Amongst all these transformed novels will appear a single genuine one, elevated, touching, simple, original, the history of Henry Esmond. Thackeray has not written a less popular nor a more beautiful story.

This book comprises the fictitious memoirs of Colonel Esmond, a contemporary of Queen Anne, who, after a troubled life in Europe, retired with his wife to Virginia, and became a planter there. Esmond speaks; and the necessity of adapting the tone to the character suppresses the satirical style, the reiterated irony, the sanguinary sarcasm, the scenes contrived to ridicule folly, the events combined to crush vice. Thenceforth we enter the real world; we let illusion guide us, we rejoice in a varied spectacle, easily unfolded, without moral intention. You are no more harassed by personal advice; you remain in your place, calm, sure, no actor's finger pointed at you to warn you at an interesting moment that the piece is played on your account, and to do you good. At the same time, and unconsciously, you are at ease Quitting bitter satire, pure narration charms you; you take rest from hating. You are like an army surgeon, who, after a day of fights and manœuvres, sits on a hillock and beholds the motion in the camp, the procession of carriages, and the distant horizon softened by the sombre tints of evening.

On the other hand, the long reflections, which seem vulgar and dislocated under the pen of the writer, become natural and connected in the mouth of the character. Esmond is an old man, writing for his children, and remarking upon his experience. He has a right to judge life; his maxims are suitable to his years: having passed into sketches of manners, they lose their pedantic air; we hear them complacently,

and perceive, as we turn the page, the calm and sad smile which has dictated them.

With the reflections we endure the details. Elsewhere, the minute descriptions appear frequently puerile; we blamed the author for dwelling, with the scrupulosity of an English painter, on school adventures, coach scenes, inn episodes; we thought that this intense studiousness, unable to sympathise with lofty themes of art, was compelled to stoop to microscopical observations and photographic details. Here all is changed. A writer of memoirs has a right to record his infantine impressions. His distant recollections, mutilated remnants of a forgotten life, have a peculiar charm; we accompany him back to infancy. A Latin lesson, a soldiers' march, a ride behind some one, become important events embellished by distance; we enjoy his peaceful and familiar pleasure, and feel with him a vast sweetness in seeing once more, with so much ease and in so clear a light, the well-known phantoms of the past. Minute detail adds to the interest in adding to the naturalness. Stories of campaign life, scattered opinions on the books and events of the time, a hundred petty scenes, a thousand petty facts, manifestly useless, are on that very account illusory. We forget the author, we listen to the old Colonel, we find ourselves carried back a hundred years, and we have the extreme pleasure, so uncommon, of believing in what we read.

Whilst the subject obviates the faults, or turns them into virtues, it offers for these virtues the very finest theme. The powerful reflection has decomposed and reproduced the manners of the time with a most astonishing fidelity. Thackeray knows Swift, Steele, Addison, St. John, Marlborough, as well as the most attentive and learned historian. He depicts their habits, household converse, like Walter Scott himself; and, what Walter Scott could not do, he imitates their style so that we are deceived by it; and many of their authentic phrases, inwoven with the text, cannot be distinguished from it. This perfect imitation is not limited to a few select scenes; it comprises the whole volume. Colonel Esmond writes as people wrote in the year 1700. The trick, I was going to say the genius, is as great as the effort and success of Paul Louis Courier, in imitating the style of ancient Greece. The style of Esmond has the calmness, the exactness, the simplicity, the solidity of the classics. Our modern temerities, our prodigal imagery, our jostled figures, our habit of gesticulation, our striving for effect, all our bad literary customs, have disappeared. Thackeray must have gone back to the primitive sense of words, discovered their forgotten shades of meaning, recomposed an outworn state of intellect and a lost species of ideas, to make his copy approach so closely to the original. The imagination of Dickens himself would have failed in this. To attempt and accomplish it, then, were needed all the sagacity, calm, and force of knowledge and meditation.

But the masterpiece of the work is the character of Esmond.

Thackeray has endowed him with that tender kindliness, almost feminine, which he everywhere extols above all other human virtues, and that self-mastery which is the effect of habitual reflection. These are the finest qualities of his psychological armoury; each by its contrast increases the value of the other. We see a hero, but original and new, English in his cool resolution, modern by the delicacy and sensibility of his heart.

Henry Esmond is a poor child, the supposed bastard of Lord Castlewood, and brought up by the inheritors of his name. In the first chapter we are touched by the modulated and noble emotion which we retain to the end of the volume. Lady Castlewood, on her first visit to the castle, comes to him in the 'book-room or yellow-gallery;' being informed by the housekeeper who the little boy is, she blushes and walked back; the next instant, touched by remorse, she returns:

'With a look of infinite pity and tenderness in her eyes, she took his hand again, placing her other fair hand on his head, and saying some words to him, which were so kind and said in a voice so sweet, that the boy, who had never looked upon so much beauty before, felt as if the touch of a superior being or angel smote him down to the ground, and kissed the fair protecting hand as he knelt on one knee. To the very last hour of his life, Esmond remembered the lady as she then spoke and looked, the rings on her fair hands, the very scent of her robe, the beam of her eyes lighting up with surprise and kindness, her lips blooming in a smile, the sun making a golden halo round her hair.[1] . . . There seemed, as the boy thought, in every look or gesture of this fair creature, an angelical softness and bright pity—in motion or repose she seemed gracious alike; the tone of her voice, though she uttered words ever so trivial, gave him a pleasure that amounted almost to anguish. It cannot be called love, that a lad of twelve years of age, little more than a menial, felt for an exalted lady, his mistress: but it was worship.'[2]

This noble and pure feeling is expanded by a succession of devoted actions, related with extreme simplicity; in the least words, in the turn of a phrase, in a chance conversation, we perceive a great heart, passionately grateful, never tiring of inventing benefits or services, sympathising, friendly, giving advice, defending the honour of the family and the welfare of the children. Twice Esmond interposed between Lord Castlewood and Mohun the duellist; it was not his fault that the murderer's weapon did not reach his own breast. When Lord Castlewood on his deathbed revealed that he was not a bastard, that the title and fortune were his, he burned without a word the confession which would have rescued him from the poverty and humiliation in which he had so long pined. Outraged by his mistress, sick of a wound received by his master's side, accused of ingratitude and cowardice, he persisted in his silence with the justification in his hand:

'And when the struggle was over in Harry's mind, a glow of righteous happiness filled it; and it was with grateful tears in his eyes that he returned thanks to God for that decision which he had been enabled to make.'[3]

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[1] *The History of Henry Esmond,* bk. i. ch. i.
[2] *Ibid.* bk. i. ch. vii. [3] *Ibid.* bk. ii. ch. i.

Later, being in love with another, sure not to marry her if his birth remained under a cloud in the eyes of the world, absolved by his benefactress, whose son he had saved, entreated by her to resume the name which belonged to him, he smiled sweetly, and gravely replied:

'"It was settled twelve years since, by my dear lord's bedside," says Colonel Esmond. "The children must know nothing of this. Frank and his heirs after him must bear our name. 'Tis his rightfully; I have not even a proof of that marriage of my father and mother, though my poor lord, on his deathbed, told me that Father Holt had brought such a proof to Castlewood. I would not seek it when I was abroad. I went and looked at my poor mother's grave in her convent. What matter to her now? No court of law on earth, upon my mere word, would deprive my Lord Viscount and set me up. I am the head of the house, dear lady; but Frank is Viscount of Castlewood still. And rather than disturb him, I would turn monk, or disappear in America."

'As he spoke so to his dearest mistress, for whom he would have been willing to give up his life, or to make any sacrifice any day, the fond creature flung herself down on her knees before him, and kissed both his hands in an outbreak of passionate love and gratitude, such as could not but melt his heart, and make him feel very proud and thankful that God had given him the power to show his love for her, and to prove it by some little sacrifice on his own part. To be able to bestow benefits or happiness on those one loves is sure the greatest blessing conferred upon a man—and what wealth or name, or gratification of ambition or vanity, could compare with the pleasure Esmond now had of being able to confer some kindness upon his best and dearest friends?

'"Dearest saint," says he, "purest soul, that has had so much to suffer, that has blest the poor lonely orphan with such a treasure of love. 'Tis for me to kneel, not for you: 'tis for me to be thankful that I can make you happy. Hath my life any other aim? Blessed be God that I can serve you!"'[1]

These noble tendernesses seem still more touching when contrasted with the surrounding circumstances. Esmond goes to the wars, serves a party, lives amidst dangers and business, judging revolutions and politics from a lofty point of view; he becomes a man of experience, well informed, learned, provident, capable of great enterprises, possessing prudence and courage, harassed by his own thoughts and griefs, ever sad and ever strong. He ends by accompanying to England the Pretender, half-brother of Queen Anne, and keeps him disguised at Castlewood, awaiting the moment when the queen, dying and won over to the cause, should declare him her heir. This young prince, a Stuart, pays court to Lord Castlewood's daughter Beatrix, whom Esmond loves, and gets out at night to join her. Esmond, who waits for him, sees the crown lost and his house dishonoured. His insulted honour and outraged love break forth in a superb and terrible rage. Pale, with set teeth, his brain fired by four nights of anxieties and watches, he preserves his clear mind, his restrained tone, and explains to the prince with perfect etiquette, with the respectful coldness of an official messenger, the folly which the prince has committed, and the villany which the prince has

[1] *The History of Henry Esmond*, bk. iii. ch. ii.

contemplated. The scene must be read to see how much superiority and passion this calmness and bitterness imply:

'"What mean you, my lord?" says the Prince, and muttered something about a *guet-à-pens*, which Esmond caught up.

'"The snare, Sir," said he, "was not of our laying; it is not we that invited you. We came to avenge, and not to compass, the dishonour of our family."

'"Dishonour! *Morbleu!* there has been no dishonour," says the Prince, turning scarlet, "only a little harmless playing."

'"That was meant to end seriously."

'"I swear," the Prince broke out impetuously, "upon the honour of a gentleman, my lords"—

'"That we arrived in time. No wrong hath been done, Frank," says Colonel Esmond, turning round to young Castlewood, who stood at the door as the talk was going on. "See! here is a paper whereon his Majesty hath deigned to commence some verses in honour, or dishonour, of Beatrix. Here is 'Madame' and 'Flamme,' 'Cruelle' and 'Rebelle,' and 'Amour' and 'Jour,' in the Royal writing and spelling. Had the Gracious lover been happy, he had not passed his time in sighing." In fact, and actually as he was speaking, Esmond cast his eyes down towards the table, and saw a paper on which my young Prince had been scrawling a madrigal, that was to finish his charmer on the morrow.

'"Sir," says the Prince, burning with rage (he had assumed his Royal coat unassisted by this time), "did I come here to receive insults?"

'"To confer them, may it please your Majesty," says the Colonel, with a very low bow, "and the gentlemen of our family are come to thank you."

'"*Malédiction!*" says the young man, tears starting into his eyes with helpless rage and mortification. "What will you with me, gentlemen?"

'"If your Majesty will please to enter the next apartment," says Esmond, preserving his grave tone, "I have some papers there which I would gladly submit to you, and by your permission I will lead the way;" and taking the taper up, and backing before the Prince with very great ceremony, Mr. Esmond passed into the little Chaplain's room, through which we had just entered into the house:—"Please to set a chair for his Majesty, Frank," says the Colonel to his companion, who wondered almost as much at this scene, and was as much puzzled by it, as the other actor in it. Then going to the crypt over the mantel-piece, the Colonel opened it, and drew thence the papers which so long had lain there.

'"Here, may it please your Majesty," says he, "is the Patent of Marquis sent over by your Royal Father at St. Germain's to Viscount Castlewood, my father: here is the witnessed certificate of my father's marriage to my mother, and of my birth and christening; I was christened of that religion of which your sainted sire gave all through life so shining example. These are my titles, dear Frank, and this what I do with them: here go Baptism and Marriage, and here the Marquisate and the August Sign-Manual, with which your predecessor was pleased to honour our race." And as Esmond spoke he set the papers burning in the brazier. "You will please, sir, to remember," he continued, "that our family hath ruined itself by fidelity to yours; that my grandfather spent his estate, and gave his blood and his son to die for your service; that my dear lord's grandfather (for lord you are now, Frank, by right and title too) died for the same cause, that my poor kinswoman, my father's second wife, after giving away her honour to your wicked perjured race, sent all her wealth to the King, and got in return that precious title that lies in ashes, and this inestimable yard of blue riband. I lay this at your feet, and stamp upon it: I draw this sword, and break it and deny you; and had

you completed the wrong you designed us, by Heaven I would have driven it through your heart, and no more pardoned you than your father pardoned Monmouth."'[1]

Two pages later he speaks thus of his marriage to Lady Castlewood:

'That happiness, which hath subsequently crowned it, cannot be written in words; 'tis of its nature sacred and secret, and not to be spoken of, though the heart be ever so full of thankfulness, save to Heaven and the One ear alone—to one fond being, the truest and tenderest and purest wife ever man was blessed with. As I think of the immense happiness which was in store for me, and of the depth and intensity of that love which, for so many years, hath blessed me, I own to a transport of wonder and gratitude for such a boon—nay, am thankful to have been endowed with a heart capable of feeling and knowing the immense beauty and value of the gift which God hath bestowed upon me. Sure, love *vincit omnia*, is immeasurably above all ambition, more precious than wealth, more noble than name. He knows not life who knows not that: he hath not felt the highest faculty of the soul who hath not enjoyed it. In the name of my wife I write the completion of hope, and the summit of happiness. To have such a love is the one blessing, in comparison of which all earthly joy is of no value; and to think of her, is to praise God.'

A character capable of such contrasts is a lofty work; it is to be remembered that Thackeray has produced no other; we regret that moral intentions have perverted these fine literary faculties; and we deplore that satire has robbed art of such a talent.

X.

Who is he; and what is the value of this literature of which he is one of the princes? At bottom, like every literature, it is a definition of man; and to judge it, we must compare it with man. We can do so now; we have just studied a mind, Thackeray himself; we have considered his faculties, their connections, results, their different degrees; we have under our eyes a model of human nature. We have a right to judge of the copy by the model, and to shape the definition which his romances lay down by the definition which his character furnishes.

The two definitions are contrary, and his portrait is a criticism on his talent. We have seen that in him the same faculties produce the beautiful and the ugly, force and weakness, success and failure; that moral reflection, after having provided him with every satirical power, debases him in art; that, after having spread through his contemporary novels a tone of vulgarity and falseness, it raises his historical novel to the level of the finest productions; that the same constitution of mind teaches him the sarcastic and violent, as well as the modulated and simple style, the bitterness and harshness of hate with the effusions and delicacies of love. The evil and the good, the beautiful and the ugly, the repulsive and the agreeable, are then in him but remoter effects, of slight importance, born of changing circumstances, derived

[1] *The History of Henry Esmond*, bk. iii. ch. xiii.

and fortuitous qualities, not essential and primitive, diverse forms which diverse streams trace in the same bed. So it is with other men. Doubtless moral qualities are of the first rank; they are the motive power of civilisation, and constitute the nobleness of the individual; society exists by them alone, and by them alone man is great. But if they are the finest fruit of the human plant, they are not its root; they give us our value, but do not constitute our elements. Neither the vices nor the virtues of man are his nature; to praise or to blame him is not to know him; approbation or disapprobation does not define him; the names of good or bad tell us nothing of what he is. Put the robber Cartouche in an Italian court of the fifteenth century; he would be a great statesman. Transport this nobleman, stingy and narrow-minded, into a shop; he will be an exemplary tradesman. This public man, of inflexible probity, is in his drawing-room an intolerable coxcomb. This father of a family, so humane, is an idiotic politician. Change a virtue in its circumstances, and it becomes a vice; change a vice in its circumstances, and it becomes a virtue. Regard the same quality from two sides; on one it is a fault, on the other a merit. The essential of man is found concealed far below these moral badges; they only point out the useful noxious effect of our inner constitution: they do not reveal our inner constitution They are safety-lamps or railway-lights attached to our names, to warn the passer-by to avoid or approach us; they are not the explanatory table of our being. Our true essence consists in the causes of our good or bad qualities, and these causes are discovered in the temperament, the species and degree of imagination, the amount and velocity of attention, the magnitude and direction of primitive passions. A character is a force, like gravity, weight, or steam, capable, as it may happen, of pernicious or profitable effects, and which must be defined otherwise than by the amount of the weight it can lift or the havoc it can cause. It is therefore to ignore man, to reduce him, as Thackeray and English literature generally do, to an aggregate of virtues and vices; it is to lose sight in him of all but the exterior and social side; it is to neglect the inner and natural element. You will find the same fault in English criticism, always moral, never psychological, bent on exactly measuring the degree of human honesty, ignorant of the mechanism of our sentiments and faculties; you will find the same fault in English religion, which is but an emotion or a discipline; in their philosophy, destitute of metaphysics; and if you ascend to the source, according to the rule which derives vices from virtues, and virtues from vices, you will see all these weaknesses derived from their native energy, their practical education, and that sort of severe and religious poetic instinct which has in time past made them Protestant and Puritan.

CHAPTER III.

Criticism and History.—Macaulay.

I. The vocation and position of Macaulay in England.

II. His *Essays*—Agreeable character and utility of the style—Opinions—Philosophy. Wherein it is English and practical—His *Essay on Bacon*—The true object, according to him, of the sciences—Comparison of Bacon with the ancients.

III. His criticism—Moral prejudices—Comparison of criticism in France and England—Why he is religious—Connection of religion and Liberalism in England—Macaulay's Liberalism—*Essay on Church and State.*

IV. His passion for political liberty—How he is the orator and historian of the Whig party—*Essays on the Revolution and the Stuarts.*

V. His talent—Taste for demonstration—Taste for development—Oratorical character of his mind—Wherein he differs from classic orators—His estimation for particular facts, experiment on the senses, personal reminiscences—Importance of decisive phenomena in every branch of knowledge—*Essays on Warren Hastings and Clive.*

VI. English marks of his talent—Rudeness—Humour—Poetry.

VII. His work—Harmony of his talent, opinion, and work—Universality, unity, interest of his history—Picture of the *Highlands—James* II. *in Ireland—The Act of Toleration—The Massacre of Glencoe*—Traces of amplification and rhetoric.

VIII. Comparison of Macaulay with French historians—Wherein he is classical—Wherein he is English—Intermediate position of his mind between the Latin and the Germanic mind.

I.

I SHALL not here attempt to write the life of Lord Macaulay. It can only be related after twenty years, when his friends shall have put together all their recollections of him. As to what is public now, it seems to me useless to recall it: every one knows that his father was an abolitionist and a philanthropist; that our Macaulay passed through a most brilliant and complete classical education; that at twenty-five his essay on Milton made him famous; that at thirty he entered Parliament, and took his standing there amongst the first orators; that he went to India to reform the law, and that on his return he was appointed to high offices; that on one occasion his liberal opinions in religious matters lost him the votes of his constituents; that he was re-elected amidst universal congratulations; that he continued to be the most celebrated

publicist and the most accomplished writer of the Whig party; and that on this ground, at the close of his life, the gratitude of his party and the public admiration, made him a peer of England. It will be a fine biography to write—a life of honour and happiness, devoted to noble ideas, and occupied by manly enterprises; literary in the first place, but sufficiently charged with action and immersed in business to furnish substance and solidity to his eloquence and style,—to create the observer side by side with the artist, and the thinker side by side with the writer. On the present occasion I will only describe the thinker and writer: I leave the life, I take his works; and first his *Essays*.

II.

His Essays are an assemblage of articles: I confess that I am fond of books such as these. In the first place, we can throw down the volume after a score of pages, begin at the end, or in the middle; we are not its slave, but its master; we can treat it like a newspaper: in fact, it is a journal of a mind. In the second place, it is varied; in turning over a page, we pass from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, from England to India: this diversity surprises and pleases. Lastly, involuntarily, the author is indiscreet; he displays himself to us, keeping back nothing; it is a familiar conversation, and no conversation is worth so much as that of England's greatest historian. We are pleased to mark the origin of this generous and powerful mind, to discover what faculties have nourished his talent, what researches have shaped his knowledge; what opinions he has formed on philosophy, religion, the state, literature; what he was, and what he has become; what he wishes, and what he believes.

Seated in our arm-chair, with our feet on the fender, we see little by little, as we turn over the leaves of the book, an animated and pensive face arise before us; the countenance assumes expression and clearness; his different features are mutually explained and lightened up; presently the author lives again for us, and before us; we perceive the causes and birth of all his thoughts, we foresee what he is going to say; his bearing and mode of speech are as familiar to us as those of a man whom we see every day; his opinions correct and affect our own; he enters into our thoughts and our life; he is two hundred leagues away, and his book stamps his image on us, as the reflected light paints on the horizon the object from which it is emitted. Such is the charm of books, which deal with all kinds of subjects, which give the author's opinion on all sorts of things, which lead us in all directions of his thoughts, and make us, so to speak, walk around his mind.

Macaulay treats philosophy in the English fashion, as a practical man. He is a disciple of Bacon, and sets him above all philosophers; he decides that genuine science dates from him; that the speculations of old thinkers are only the sport of the mind; that for two thousand

years the human mind was on a wrong tack; that only since Bacon it has discovered the goal to which it must turn, and the method by which it must arrive there. This goal is utility. The object of knowledge is not theory, but application. The object of mathematicians is not the satisfaction of an idle curiosity, but the invention of machines calculated to alleviate human labour, to increase the power of dominating nature, to render life more secure, commodious, and happy. The object of astronomy is not to furnish matter for vast calculations and poetical cosmogonies, but to subserve geography and to guide navigation. The object of anatomy and the zoological sciences is not to suggest eloquent systems on the nature of organisation, or to set before the eyes the orders of the animal kingdom by an ingenious classification, but to conduct the surgeon's hand and the physician's prognosis. The object of every research and every study is to diminish pain, to augment comfort, to ameliorate the condition of man; theoretical laws are serviceable only in their practical use; the labours of the laboratory and the cabinet receive their sanction and value only, through the use made of them by the workshops and mills; the tree of knowledge must be estimated only by its fruits. If we wish to judge of a philosophy, we must observe its effects; its works are not its books, but its acts. The philosophy of the ancients produced fine writings, sublime phrases, infinite disputes, hollow dreams, systems displaced by systems, and left the world as ignorant, as unhappy, and as wicked as it found it. That of Bacon produced observations, experiments, discoveries, machines, entire arts and industries:

'It has lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendour of the day; it has extended the range of the human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all despatch of business; it has enabled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which whirl along without horses, and the ocean in ships which run ten knots an hour against the wind.'[1]

The first was consumed in solving unsolvable enigmas, fabricating portraits of an imaginary sage, mounting from hypothesis to hypothesis, tumbling from absurdity to absurdity; it despised what was practicable, promised what was impracticable; and because it despised the limits of the human mind, ignored its power. The other, measuring our force and weakness, diverted us from roads that were closed to us, to start us on roads that were open to us; it recognised facts and laws, because

[1] Macaulay's Works, ed. Lady Trevelyan, 8 vols. 1866; *Essay on Bacon*, vi. 222.

it resigned itself to remain ignorant of their essence and principles; it has rendered man more happy, because it has not pretended to render him perfect; it has discovered great truths and great effects, because it had the courage and good sense to study small things, and to creep for a long time over petty vulgar experiments; it has become glorious and powerful, because it has deigned to become humble and useful. Formerly, science furnished only vain pretensions and chimerical conceptions, whilst it held itself aloof, far from practical existence, and styled itself the sovereign of man. Now, science possesses acquired truths, the hope of loftier discoveries, an ever-increasing authority, because it has entered upon active existence, and it has declared itself the servant of man. Let her keep to her new functions; let her not try to penetrate the region of the invisible; let her renounce what must remain unknown; she does not contain her own issue, she is but a medium; man was not made for her, but she for man; she is like the thermometers and piles which she constructs for her own experiments; her whole glory, merit, and office, is to be an instrument:

'We have sometimes thought that an amusing fiction might be written, in which a disciple of Epictetus and a disciple of Bacon should be introduced as fellow-travellers. They come to a village where the small-pox has just begun to rage, and find houses shut up, intercourse suspended, the sick abandoned, mothers weeping in terror over their children. The Stoic assures the dismayed population that there is nothing bad in the small-pox, and that to a wise man disease, deformity, death, the loss of friends, are not evils. The Baconian takes out a lancet and begins to vaccinate. They find a body of miners in great dismay. An explosion of noisome vapours has just killed many of those who were at work; and the survivors are afraid to venture into the cavern. The Stoic assures them that such an accident is nothing but a mere ἀποπροηγμένον. The Baconian, who has no such fine word at his command, contents himself with devising a safety-lamp. They find a ship-wrecked merchant wringing his hands on the shore. His vessel with an inestimable cargo has just gone down, and he is reduced in a moment from opulence to beggary. The Stoic exhorts him not to seek happiness in things which lie without himself, and repeats the whole chapter of Epictetus, πρὸς τοὺς τὴν ἀπορίαν δεδοικότας. The Baconian constructs a diving-bell, goes down in it, and returns with the most precious effects from the wreck. It would be easy to multiply illustrations of the difference between the philosophy of thorns and the philosophy of fruit, the philosophy of words and the philosophy of works.'[1]

It is not for me to discuss these opinions; it is for the reader to blame or praise them, if he sees fit: I do not wish to criticise doctrines, but to depict a man; and truly nothing could be more striking than this absolute scorn for speculation, and this absolute love for the practical. Such a mind is entirely suitable to the national genius: in England a barometer is still called a philosophical instrument; and philosophy is there a thing unknown. The English have moralists, psychologists, but no metaphysicians: if there is one—Hamilton, for instance—

[1] Macaulay's Works; *Essay on Bacon*, vi. 223.

he is a sceptic in metaphysics; he has only read the German philosophers to refute them; he regards speculative philosophy as an extravagance of visionaries, and is compelled to ask his readers to pardon him for the strangeness of his matter, when he tries to make them understand somewhat of Hegel's conceptions. The English, positive and practical men, excellent politicians, administrators, fighters, and workers, are no more suited than the ancient Romans for the abstractions of subtle dialectics and grand systems; and Cicero, too, once excused himself, when he tried to expound to his audience of senators and public men, the deep and audacious deductions of the Stoics.

III.

The only part of philosophy which pleases men of this kind is morality, because, like them, it is wholly practical, and only attends to actions. Nothing else was studied at Rome, and every one knows what place it holds in English philosophy: Hutcheson, Price, Ferguson, Wollaston, Adam Smith, Bentham, Reid, and many others, have filled the last century with dissertations and discussions on the rule of duty, and the faculty which discovers our duty; and Macaulay's *Essays* are a new example of this national and dominant inclination: his biographies are less portraits than judgments. What strictly is the degree of uprightness and vice of the personage, that is the important question for him; he makes all other questions refer to it; he applies himself throughout only to justify, excuse, accuse, or condemn. If he speaks of Lord Clive, Warren Hastings, Sir William Temple, Addison, Milton, or any other man, he devotes himself first of all to measure exactly the number and greatness of their faults and virtues; he interrupts himself, in the midst of a narration, to examine whether the action, which he is relating, is just or unjust; he considers it as a legist and a moralist, according to positive and natural law; he takes into account the state of public opinion, the examples which surrounded the accused, the principles he professed, the education he has received; he bases his opinion on analogies drawn from ordinary life, from the history of all peoples, the laws of all countries; he brings forward so many proofs, such certain facts, such conclusive reasonings, that the best advocate might find a model in him; and when at last he pronounces judgment, we think we are listening to the summing up of a judge. If he analyses a literature—that of the Restoration, for instance—he empanels before the reader a sort of jury to judge it. He makes it appear at the bar, and reads the indictment; he then presents the plea of the defenders, who try to excuse its levities and indecencies: at last he begins to speak in his turn, and proves that the arguments set forth are not applicable to the case in question; that the accused writers have laboured effectually and with premeditation, to corrupt morals; that they not only employed unbecoming words, but that they designedly, and with deliberate intent, represented unbecoming

things; that they always took care to blot out the hatefulness of vice, to render virtue ridiculous, to place adultery amongst the good manners and necessary exploits of a man of taste; that this intention was all the more manifest from its being in the spirit of the times, and that they were pandering to a crime of their age. If I dare employ, like Macaulay, religious comparisons, I should say that his criticism was like the Last Judgment, in which the diversity of talents, characters, ranks, employments, will disappear before the consideration of virtue and vice, and where there will be no more artists, but a judge of the righteous and the sinners.

In France, criticism has a more liberal gait; it is less subservient to morality, and nearer akin to art. When we try to relate a life, or paint the character of a man, we consider him very readily as a simple subject of painting or science: we only think of displaying the various feelings of his heart, the connection of his ideas, and the necessity of his actions; we do not judge him, we only wish to represent him to the eyes, and make him intelligible to the reason. We are spectators, and nothing more. What matters it if Peter or Paul is a rascal? that is the business of his contemporaries: they suffered from his vices, and ought to think only of despising and condemning him. Now we are beyond his reach, and hatred has disappeared with the danger. At this distance, and in the historic perspective, I see in him but a mental machine, provided with certain springs, animated by a primary impulse, affected by various circumstances. I calculate the play of his motives; I feel with him the impact of obstacles; I see beforehand the curve which his motion will trace out; I experience for him neither aversion nor disgust; I have left these feelings on the threshold of history, and I taste the very deep and pure pleasure of seeing a soul act after a definite law, in a fixed groove, with all the variety of human passions, with the succession and constraint which the inner structure of man imposes on the external development of his passions.

In a country where men are so much occupied by morality, and so little by philosophy, there is much religion. For lack of natural theology they have a positive theology, and demand from the Bible the metaphysics not supplied by reason. Macaulay is a Protestant; and though a very candid and liberal mind, he at times retains the English prejudices against the Catholic religion.[1] Popery in England always

[1] 'Charles himself, and his creature Laud, while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices,—a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance.'—Macaulay, v. 24; *Milton.*

'It is difficult to relate without a pitying smile, that in the sacrifice of the mass, Loyola saw transubstantiation take place, and that, as he stood praying on the steps of the Church of St. Dominic, he saw the Trinity in Unity, and wept aloud with joy and wonder.'—Macaulay, vi. 468; *Ranke, History of the Popes.*

passes for an impious idolatry and for a degrading servitude. After two revolutions, Protestantism, allied to liberty, seemed to be the religion of liberty; and Roman-Catholicism, allied to despotism, seemed the religion of despotism: the two doctrines have both assumed the name of the cause which they sustained. To the first has been transferred the love and veneration which were felt for the rights which it defended; on the second has been poured the scorn and hatred which were felt for the slavery which it would have introduced: political passions have inflamed religious beliefs; Protestantism has been confounded with the victorious fatherland, Roman-Catholicism, with the conquered enemy; the prejudice survived when the strife ended, and to this day English Protestants do not feel for the doctrines of Roman-Catholics the same goodwill or impartiality which French Roman-Catholics feel for the doctrines of Protestants.

But these English opinions are moderated in Macaulay by an ardent love for justice. He is liberal in the largest and best sense of the word. He demands that all citizens should be equal before the law, that men of all sects should be declared capable to fill all public functions—that Roman-Catholics and Jews may, as well as Lutherans, Anglicans, and Calvinists, sit in Parliament. He refutes Mr. Gladstone and the partisans of State religion with incomparable ardour and eloquence, abundance of proof, and force of argument; he clearly proves that the State is only a secular association, that its end is wholly temporal, that its single object is to protect the life, liberty, and property of the citizens; that in entrusting to it the defence of spiritual interests, we overturn the order of things; and that to attribute to it a religious belief, is as though a man, walking with his feet, should also confide to his feet the care of seeing and hearing. This question has often been discussed in France; it is so to this day; but no one has brought to it more common sense, more practical reasoning, more palpable arguments. Macaulay withdraws the discussion from the region of metaphysics; he brings it down to the earth; he makes it accessible to all minds; he takes his proofs and examples from the best known facts of ordinary life; he addresses the shopkeeper, the citizen, the artist, the scholar, every one; he connects the truth, which he asserts, with the familiar and intimate truths which no one can help admitting, and which are believed with all the force of experience and habit; he carries off and conquers our belief by such solid reasons, that his adversaries will thank him for convincing them; and if by chance a few amongst us have need of a lesson on tolerance, they had better look for it in Macaulay's essay on that subject.

IV.

This love of justice becomes a passion when political liberty is at stake; this is the sensitive point; and when we touch it, we touch the writer to the quick. Macaulay loves it interestedly, because it is the only guarantee of the properties, happiness, and life of individuals; he

loves it from pride, because it is the honour of man: he loves it from patriotism, because it is a legacy left by preceding generations; because for two hundred years a succession of upright and great men have defended it against all attacks, and preserved it in all dangers; because it has made the power and glory of England; because in teaching the citizens to will and to decide for themselves, it adds to their dignity and intelligence; because in assuring internal peace and continuous progress, it guarantees the land from bloody revolutions and silent decay. All these advantages are perpetually present to his eyes; and whoever attacks the liberty, which founds them, becomes at once his enemy. Macaulay cannot look calmly on the oppression of man; every outrage on human will hurts him like a personal outrage. At every step bitter words escape him, and the stale adulations of courtiers, which he meets with, bring to his lips a sarcasm the more violent from being the more deserved. Pitt, he says, at college wrote Latin verses on the death of George I. In this piece 'the Muses are earnestly entreated to weep over the urn of Cæsar: for Cæsar, says the poet, loved the muses; Cæsar, who could not read a line of Pope, and who loved nothing but punch and fat women.'[1] Elsewhere, in the biography of Miss Burney, he relates how the poor young lady, having become celebrated by her two first novels, received as a reward, and as a great favour, a place of keeper of the robes of Queen Charlotte; how, worn out with watching, sick, nearly dying, she asked as a favour the permission to depart; how 'the sweet queen' was indignant at this impertinence, unable to understand that any one could refuse to die in and for her service, or that a woman of letters should prefer health, life, and glory to the honour of folding her Majesty's dresses. But it is when Macaulay comes to the history of the Revolution that he hauls to justice and vengeance those who had violated the rights of the public, who had hated and betrayed the popular cause, who had outraged liberty. He does not speak as a historian, but as a contemporary; it seems as though his life and his honour were at stake, that he pleaded for himself, that he was a member of the Long Parliament, that he heard at the door the muskets and swords of the guards sent to arrest Pym and Hampden. M. Guizot has related the same history; but you recognise in his book the calm judgment and impartial emotion of a philosopher. He does not condemn the actions of Strafford or Charles; he explains them; he shows in Strafford the imperious character, the domineering genius which feels itself born to command and to break through oppositions, whom an invincible bent rouses against the law or the right which restrains him, who oppresses from a sort of inner craving, and who is made to govern as a sword is to strike. He shows in Charles the innate respect for royalty, the belief in divine right, the rooted conviction that every remonstrance or demand is an insult to his crown, an outrage on his

[1] Macaulay, vi. 39; *An Essay on William Pitt, Earl of Chatham.*

person, an impious and criminal sedition. Thenceforth you see in the strife of king and parliament but the strife of two doctrines; you cease to take an interest in one or the other, to take an interest in both; you are spectators of a drama; you are no longer judges at a trial. But it is a trial which Macaulay conducts before us; he takes a side in it; his account is the address of a public prosecutor before the court, the most entrancing, the most harsh, the best reasoned, that was ever written. He approves of the condemnation of Strafford; he honours and admires Cromwell; he exalts the character of the Puritans; he praises Hampden to such a degree, that he calls him the equal of Washington; he has no words scornful and insulting enough for Laud; and what is more terrible, each of his judgments is justified by as many quotations, authorities, historic precedents, arguments, conclusive proofs, as the vast erudition of Hallam or the calm dialectics of Mackintosh could have assembled. Judge of this transport of passion and this withering logic by a single passage:

'For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim, by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase, infringed by the perfidious King who had recognised them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another parliament: another chance was given to our fathers: were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut?* Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

'The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James the Second no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

'We charge him with having broken his coronation oath; and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates; and the defence is, that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

'For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, a good man, but a bad king. We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table, and all his regularity at chapel.'[1]

This is for the father; now the son will receive something. The reader will perceive, by the furious invective, what excessive rancour the government of the Stuarts left in the heart of a patriot, a Whig, a Protestant, and an Englishman:

'Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love, of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices, the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds, the golden age of the coward, the bigot, and the slave. The King cringed to his rival that he might trample on his people, sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed, with complacent infamy, her degrading insults, and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots, and the jests of buffoons, regulated the policy of the state. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch; and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race accursed of God and man was a second time driven forth, to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a by-word and a shaking of the head to the nations.'[2]

This piece, with all the biblical metaphors, and which has preserved something of the tone of Milton and the Puritan prophets, shows to what an issue the various tendencies of this great mind were turning—what was its bent—how the practical spirit, science and historic talent, the unvaried presence of moral and religious ideas, love of country and justice, concurred to make of Macaulay the historian of liberty.

V.

In this his talent assisted him; for his opinions are akin to his talent.

What first strikes us in him is the extreme solidity of his mind. He proves all that he says, with astonishing vigour and authority. We are almost certain never to go astray in following him. If he cites a witness, he begins by measuring the veracity and intelligence of the authors quoted, and by correcting the errors they may have committed, through negligence or partiality. If he pronounces a judgment, he relies on the most certain facts, the clearest principles, the simplest and most logical deductions. If he develops an argument, he never loses himself in a digression; he always has his goal before his eyes;

[1] Macaulay, v. 27; *Milton*.

[2] *Ibid.* v. 35; *Milton*.

he advances towards it by the surest and straightest road. If he rises to general consideration, he mounts step by step through all the grades of generalisation, without omitting one; he feels the ground every instant; he neither adds nor subtracts from facts; he desires, at the cost of every precaution and research, to arrive at the precise truth. He knows an infinity of details of every kind; he owns a great number of philosophic ideas of every species; but his erudition is as well tempered as his philosophy, and both constitute a coin worthy of circulation, amongst all thinking minds. We feel that he believes nothing without reason; that if we doubted one of the facts which he advances, or one of the views which he propounds, we should at once encounter a multitude of authentic documents and a serried phalanx of convincing arguments. In France and Germany we are too accustomed to receive hypotheses for historic laws, and doubtful anecdotes for attested events. We too often see whole systems established, from day to day, according to the caprice of a writer; a sort of fantastic castles, whose regular arrangement simulates the appearance of genuine edifices, and which vanish at a breath, when we come to touch them. We have all made theories, in a fireside discussion, in case of need, when for lack of argument we required a fictitious reasoning, like those Chinese generals who, to terrify their enemies, place amongst their troops formidable monsters of painted cardboard. We have judged men at random, under the impression of the moment, on a detached action, an isolated document; and we have dressed them up with vices or virtues, folly or genius, without controlling by logic or criticism the hazardous decisions, to which our precipitation had carried us. Thus we feel a deep satisfaction and a sort of internal peace, on leaving so many doctrines of ephemeral bloom in our books or reviews, to follow the steady gait of a guide so clear-sighted, reflective, instructed, able to lead us aright. We understand why the English accuse the French of being frivolous, and the Germans of being chimerical. Macaulay brings to the moral sciences that spirit of circumspection, that desire for certainty, and that instinct of truth, which make up the practical mind, and which from the time of Bacon have constituted the scientific merit and power of his nation. If art and beauty are lost, truth and certainty are gained; and no one, for instance, would blame our author for inserting the following demonstration in the life of Addison:

'He (Pope) asked Addison's advice. Addison said that the poem as it stood was a delicious little thing, and entreated Pope not to run the risk of marring what was so excellent in trying to mend it. Pope afterwards declared that this insidious counsel first opened his eyes to the baseness of him who gave it.

'Now there can be no doubt that Pope's plan was most ingenious, and that he afterwards executed it with great skill and success. But does it necessarily follow that Addison's advice was bad? And if Addison's advice was bad, does it necessarily follow that it was given from bad motives? If a friend were to ask us whether we would advise him to risk his all in a lottery of which the chances were ten to one against him, we should do our best to dissuade him from running such

a risk. Even if he were so lucky as to get the thirty thousand pound prize, we should not admit that we had counselled him ill; and we should certainly think it the height of injustice in him to accuse us of having been actuated by malice. We think Addison's advice good advice. It rested on a sound principle, the result of long and wide experience. The general rule undoubtedly is that, when a successful work of imagination has been produced, it should not be recast. We cannot at this moment call to mind a single instance in which this rule has been transgressed with happy effect, except the instance of the Rape of the Lock. Tasso recast his Jerusalem, Akenside recast his Pleasures of the Imagination and his Epistle to Curio. Pope himself, emboldened no doubt by the success with which he had expanded and remodelled the Rape of the Lock, made the same experiment on the Dunciad. All these attempts failed. Who was to foresee that Pope would, once in his life, be able to do what he could not himself do twice, and what nobody else has ever done?

'Addison's advice was good. But had it been bad, why should we pronounce it dishonest? Scott tells us that one of his best friends predicted the failure of Waverley. Herder adjured Goethe not to take so unpromising a subject as Faust. Hume tried to dissuade Robertson from writing the History of Charles the Fifth. Nay, Pope himself was one of those who prophesied that Cato would never succeed on the stage, and advised Addison to print it without risking a representation. But Scott, Goethe, Robertson, Addison, had the good sense and generosity to give their advisers credit for the best intentions. Pope's heart was not of the same kind with theirs.'[1]

What does the reader think of this dilemma, and this double series of inductions? The demonstration would not be more studied or rigorous, if a physical law were in question.

This demonstrative talent was increased by the talent for development. Macaulay enlightens inattentive minds, as well as he convinces opposing minds; he manifests, as well as he persuades, and spreads as much evidence over obscure questions as certitude over doubtful points. It is impossible not to understand him; he approaches the subject under every aspect, he turns it over on every side; it seems as though he addressed himself to every spectator, and studied to make himself understood by every individual; he calculates the scope of every mind, and seeks for each a fit mode of exposition; he takes us all by the hand, and leads us alternately to the end, which he has marked out beforehand. He sets out from the simplest facts, he descends to our level, he brings himself even with our mind; he spares us the pain of the slightest effort; then he leads us on, and smoothes the road throughout; we rise gradually without perceiving the slope, and at the end we find ourselves at the top, after having walked as easily as on the plain. When a subject is obscure, he is not content with a first explanation; he gives a second, then a third: he sheds light in abundance from all sides, he searches for it in all regions of history; and the wonderful thing is, that he is never long. In reading him we find ourselves in our proper sphere; we feel as though we were born to understand; we are annoyed to have

[1] Macaulay, vii. 109; *Life and Writings of Addison.*

taken twilight so long for day; we rejoice to see this abounding light rising and leaping forth in streams; the exact style, the antithesis of ideas, the harmonious construction, the artfully balanced paragraphs, the vigorous summaries, the regular sequence of thoughts, the frequent comparisons, the fine arrangement of the whole—not an idea or phrase of his writings in which the talent and the desire to explain, the characteristic of an orator, does not shine forth. Macaulay was a member of Parliament, and spoke so well, we are told, that he was listened to for the mere pleasure of listening. The habit of public speaking is perhaps the cause of this incomparable lucidity. To convince a great assembly, we must address all the members; to rivet the attention of absent-minded and weary men, we must save them from all fatigue; they must take in too much in order to take in enough. Public speaking vulgarises ideas; it drags truth from the height at which it dwells, with some thinkers, to bring it amongst the crowd; it reduces it to the level of ordinary minds, who, without this intervention, would only have seen it from afar, and high above them. Thus, when great orators consent to write, they are the most powerful of writers; they make philosophy popular; they lift all minds a stage higher, and seem to magnify human intelligence. In the hands of Cicero, the dogmas of the Stoics and the dialectics of the Academicians lose their prickles. The subtle Greek arguments become united and easy; the hard problems of providence, immortality, highest good, become public property. Senators, men of business, lawyers, lovers of formulas and procedure, the massive and narrow intelligence of publicists, comprehend the deductions of Chrysippus; and the book *De Officiis* has made the morality of Panætius popular. In our days, M. Thiers, in his two great histories, has placed within reach of everybody the most involved questions of strategy and finance; if he would write a course of political economy for street-porters, I am sure he would be understood; and pupils of the lower classes at school have been able to read M. Guizot's *History of Civilisation.*

When, with the faculty for proof and explanation, a man feels the desire, he arrives at vehemence. These serried and multiplied arguments which all tend to a single aim, those reiterated logical points, returning every instant, one upon the other, to shake the opponent, give heat and passion to the style. Rarely was eloquence more sweeping than Macaulay's. He has an oratorical impetus; all his phrases have a tone; we feel that he would govern minds, that he is irritated by resistance, that he fights as he discusses. In his books the discussion always seizes and carries away the reader; it advances evenly, with accumulating force, straightforward, like those great American rivers, impetuous as a torrent and wide as a sea. This abundance of thought and style, this multitude of explanations, ideas, and facts, this vast aggregate of historical knowledge goes rolling on, urged forward by internal passion, sweeping away objections in its course, and adding to the dash of eloquence the irresistible force of its mass and weight.

We might say that the history of James II. is a discourse in two volumes, pronounced in a breath, with never-failing voice. We see the oppression and discontent begin, increase, widen, the partisans of James abandoning him one by one, the idea of revolution conceived in all hearts, confirmed, fixed, the preparations made, the event approaching, growing imminent, then suddenly falling on the blind and unjust monarch, and sweeping away his throne and dynasty, with the violence of a foreseen and fatal tempest. True eloquence is that which thus perfects argument by emotion, which reproduces the unity of events by the unity of passion, which repeats the motion and the chain of facts by the motion and the chain of ideas. It is a genuine imitation of nature; more complete than pure analysis; it reanimates beings; its dash and vehemence form part of science and of truth. Of whatever subject he treats, political economy, morality, philosophy, literature, history, Macaulay is impassioned for his subject. The current which bears away events, excites in him, as soon as he sees it, a current which bears forward his thought. He does not set forth his opinion; he pleads it. He has that energetic, sustained, and vibrating tone which bows down opposition and conquers belief. His thought is an active force; it is imposed on the hearer; it attacks him with such superiority, falls upon him with such a train of proofs, such a manifest and legitimate authority, such a powerful impulse, that we never think of resisting it; and it masters the heart by its vehemence, whilst at the same time it masters the reason by its evidence.

All these gifts are common to orators; they are found in different proportions and degrees, in men like Cicero and Livy, Bourdaloue and Bossuet, Fox and Burke. These fine and solid minds form a natural family, and all have for their chief feature the habit and talent of passing from particular to general ideas, orderly and successively, as we climb a ladder by setting our feet one after the other on every round. The inconvenience of this art is the use of common-place. They who practise it, do not depict objects with precision; they fall easily into vague rhetoric. They hold in their hands ready-made developments, a sort of portative scales, equally applicable on both sides of the same and every question. They continue willingly in a middle region, amongst the tirades and arguments of the special pleader, with an indifferent knowledge of the human heart, and a fair number of amplifications on that which is useful and just. In France and at Rome, amongst the Latin races, especially in the seventeenth century, these men love to hover above the earth, amidst grand words or general considerations, in the style of the drawing-room and the academy. They do not descend to minor facts, illustrative details, circumstantial examples of vulgar life. They are more inclined to plead than to prove. In this Macaulay is distinguished from them. His principle is, that a special fact has more hold on the mind than a general reflection. He knows that, to give men a clear and vivid idea, they must be brought back to their personal

experience. He remarks[1] that, in order to make them realise a storm, the only method is to recall to them some storm which they have themselves seen and heard, with which their memory is still charged, and which still re-echoes through all their senses. He practises in his style the philosophy of Bacon and Locke. With him, as well as with them, the origin of every idea is a sensation. Every complicated argument, every entire conception, has certain particular facts for its only support. It is so for every structure of ideas, as well as for a scientific theory. Beneath long calculations, algebraical formulas, subtle deductions, written volumes which contain the combinations and elaborations of learned minds, there are two or three sensible experiences, two or three little facts on which you may lay your finger, a turn of the wheel in a machine, a scalpel-cut in a living body, an unlooked-for colour in a liquid. These are decisive specimens. The whole substance of theory, the whole force of proof, is contained in this. Truth is here, as a nut in its shell: painful and ingenious discussion adds nothing thereto; it only extracts the nut. Thus, if you would rightly prove, you must before all present these specimens, insist upon them, make them visible and tangible to the reader, as far as may be done in words. This is difficult, for words are not things. The only resource of the writer is to employ words which bring things before the eyes. For this he must appeal to the reader's personal observation, set out from his experience, compare the unknown objects presented to him with the known objects which he sees every day, place past events beside contemporary events. Macaulay always has before his mind English imaginations, full of English images, I mean full of the detailed and present recollections of a London street, a dram-shop, a wretched alley, an afternoon in Hyde Park, a moist green landscape, a white ivy-covered country-house, a clergyman in a white tie, a sailor in a sou'-wester. He has recourse to such recollections; he makes them still more precise by descriptions and statistics; he notes colours and qualities; he has a passion for exactness; his descriptions are worthy both of a painter and a topographer; he writes like a man who sees the physical and sensible object, and who at the same time classifies and weighs it. You will see him carry his figures even to moral or literary worth, assign to an action, a virtue, a book, a talent, its compartment and its step in the scale, with such clearness and relief, that we could easily imagine ourselves in a classified museum, not of stuffed skins, but of sensitive, suffering living animals.

Consider, for instance, these phrases, by which he tries to render visible to an English public, events in India:

'During that interval the business of a servant of the Company was simply to wring out of the natives a hundred or two hundred thousand pounds as speedily as possible, that he might return home before his constitution had suffered from the

[1] See in his *Essay on the Life and Writings of Addison* (vii. 78) Macaulay's remarks on the *Campaign*.

heat, to marry a peer's daughter, to buy rotten boroughs in Cornwall, and to give balls in St. James' Square.[1] . . . There was still a nabob of Bengal, who stood to the English rulers of his country in the same relation in which Augustulus stood to Odoacer, or the last Merovingians to Charles Martel and Pepin. He lived at Moorshedabad, surrounded by princely magnificence. He was approached with outward marks of reverence, and his name was used in public instruments. But in the government of the country he had less real share than the youngest writer or cadet in the Company's service.'[2]

Of Nuncomar, the native servant of the Company, he writes:

'Of his moral character it is difficult to give a notion to those who are acquainted with human nature only as it appears in our island. What the Italian is to the Englishman, what the Hindoo is to the Italian, what the Bengalee is to other Hindoos, that was Nuncomar to other Bengalees. The physical organization of the Bengalee is feeble even to effeminacy. He lives in a constant vapour bath. His pursuits are sedentary, his limbs delicate, his movements languid. During many ages he has been trampled upon by men of bolder and more hardy breeds. Courage, independence, veracity, are qualities to which his constitution and his situation are equally unfavourable. His mind bears a singular analogy to his body. It is weak even to helplessness, for purposes of manly resistance; but its suppleness and its tact move the children of sterner climates to admiration not unmingled with contempt. All those arts which are the natural defence of the weak are more familiar to this subtle race than to the Ionian of the time of Juvenal, or to the Jew of the dark ages. What the horns are to the buffalo, what the paw is to the tiger, what the sting is to the bee, what beauty, according to the old Greek song, is to woman, deceit is to the Bengalee. Large promises, smooth excuses, elaborate tissues of circumstantial falsehood, chicanery, perjury, forgery, are the weapons, offensive and defensive, of the people of the Lower Ganges. All those millions do not furnish one sepoy to the armies of the Company. But as usurers, as money-changers, as sharp legal practitioners, no class of human beings can bear a comparison with them.'[3]

It was such men and such affairs, which were to provide Burke with the amplest and most brilliant subject-matter for his eloquence; and when Macaulay described the distinctive talent of the great orator, he described his own:

'He (Burke) had, in the highest degree, that noble faculty whereby man is able to live in the past and in the future, in the distant and in the unreal. India and its inhabitants were not to him, as to most Englishmen, mere names and abstractions, but a real country and a real people. The burning sun, the strange vegetation of the palm and the cocoa-tree, the rice-field, the tank, the huge trees, older than the Mogul empire, under which the village crowds assemble; the thatched roof of the peasant's hut; the rich tracery of the mosque where the imaum prays with his face to Mecca, the drums, and banners, and gaudy idols, the devotee swinging in the air, the graceful maiden, with the pitcher on her head, descending the steps to the river-side, the black faces, the long beards, the yellow streaks of sect, the turbans and the flowing robes, the spears and the silver maces, the elephants with their canopies of state, the gorgeous palanquin of the prince, and the close litter of the noble lady, all those things were to him as the objects amidst which his own life

[1] Macaulay, vi. 549; *Warren Hastings.* [2] *Ibid.* 553. [3] *Ibid.* 555.

had been passed, as the objects which lay on the road between Beaconsfield and St. James's Street. All India was present to the eye of his mind, from the halls where suitors laid gold and perfumes at the feet of sovereigns, to the wild moor where the gipsy camp was pitched, from the bazar, humming like a bee-hive with the crowd of buyers and sellers, to the jungle where the lonely courier shakes his bunch of iron rings to scare away the hyænas. He had just as lively an idea of the insurrection at Benares as of Lord George Gordon's riots, and of the execution of Nuncomar as of the execution of Dr. Dodd. Oppression in Bengal was to him the same thing as oppression in the streets of London.'[1]

VI.

Other forms of his talent are more peculiarly English. Macaulay has a rough touch; when he strikes, he knocks down. Béranger sings:

'Chez nous, point,
Point de ces coups de poing
Qui font tant d'honneur à l'Angleterre.'[2]

And the French reader would be astonished if he heard a great historian treat an illustrious poet in this style:

'But in all those works in which Mr. Southey has completely abandoned narration, and has undertaken to argue moral and political questions, his failure has been complete and ignominious. On such occasions his writings are rescued from utter contempt and derision solely by the beauty and purity of the English. We find, we confess, so great a charm in Mr. Southey's style that, even when he writes nonsense, we generally read it with pleasure, except indeed when he tries to be droll. A more insufferable jester never existed. He very often attempts to be humorous, and yet we do not remember a single occasion on which he has succeeded farther than to be quaintly and flippantly dull. In one of his works he tells us that Bishop Spratt was very properly so called, inasmuch as he was a very small poet. And in the book now before us he cannot quote Francis Bugg, the renegade Quaker, without a remark on his unsavoury name. A wise man might talk folly like this by his own fireside; but that any human being, after having made such a joke, should write it down, and copy it out, and transmit it to the printer, and correct the proof-sheets, and send it forth into the world, is enough to make us ashamed of our species.'[3]

We may imagine that Macaulay does not treat better the dead than the living. Thus he speaks of Archbishop Laud:

'The severest punishment which the two Houses could have inflicted on him would have been to set him at liberty and send him to Oxford. There he might have staid, tortured by his own diabolical temper, hungering for Puritans to pillory and mangle, plaguing the Cavaliers, for want of somebody else to plague, with his peevishness and absurdity, performing grimaces and antics in the cathedral, continuing that incomparable diary, which we never see without forgetting the vices of his heart in the imbecility of his intellect, minuting down his dreams, counting the drops of blood which fell from his nose, watching the direction of the salt, and listening for the note of the screech-owls. Contemptuous mercy was

[1] Macaulay, vi. 619; *Warren Hastings.*
[2] Béranger, *Chansons*, 2 vols. 1853; *Les Boxeurs, ou L'Anglomane.*
[3] Macaulay, v. 333; *Southey's Colloquies on Society.*

the only vengeance which it became the Parliament to take on such a ridiculous old bigot.'[1]

While he jests he remains grave, as do almost all the writers of his country. Humour consists in saying extremely comical things in a solemn tone, and in preserving a lofty style and ample phraseology, at the very moment when you are making all your hearers laugh. Such is the beginning of an article on a new historian of Burleigh:

'The work of Dr. Nares has filled us with astonishment similar to that which Captain Lemuel Gulliver felt when first he landed in Brobdignag, and saw corn as high as the oaks in the New Forest, thimbles as large as buckets, and wrens of the bulk of turkeys. The whole book, and every component part of it, is on a gigantic scale. The title is as long as an ordinary preface: the prefatory matter would furnish out an ordinary book: and the book contains as much reading as an ordinary library. We cannot sum up the merits of the stupendous mass of paper which lies before us better than by saying that it consists of about two thousand closely printed quarto pages, that it occupies fifteen hundred inches cubic measure, and that it weighs sixty pounds avoirdupois. Such a book might, before the deluge, have been considered as light reading by Hilpah and Shalum. But unhappily the life of man is now threescore years and ten; and we cannot but think it somewhat unfair in Dr. Nares to demand from us so large a portion of so short an existence.'[2]

This comparison, borrowed from Swift, is a mockery in Swift's taste. Mathematics become in English hands an excellent means of raillery; and we remember how the Dean, comparing Roman and English generosity by numbers, overwhelmed Marlborough by an addition. Humour employs against the people it attacks, positive facts, commercial arguments, odd contrasts drawn from vulgar life. This surprises and perplexes the reader, without warning; he falls abruptly in some familiar and grotesque detail; the shock is violent; he bursts out laughing without being much amused; the hit comes so suddenly and hard, that it is like a knock-down blow. For instance, Macaulay is refuting those who would not print the indecent classical authors:

'We find it difficult to believe that, in a world so full of temptations as this, any gentleman whose life would have been virtuous if he had not read Aristophanes and Juvenal will be made vicious by reading them. A man who, exposed to all the influences of such a state of society as that in which we live, is yet afraid of exposing himself to the influence of a few Greek or Latin verses, acts, we think, much like the felon who begged the sheriffs to let him have an umbrella held over his head from the door of Newgate to the gallows, because it was a drizzling morning, and he was apt to take cold.'[3]

Irony, sarcasm, the bitterest kinds of pleasantry, are the rule with Englishmen. They tear when they scratch. To be convinced of this, we should compare French scandal, as Molière represents it in the

[1] Macaulay, v. 204; *Hallam's Constitutional History.*
[2] *Ibid.* v. 587; *Burleigh and his Times.*
[3] *Ibid.* vi. 491; *Comic Dramatists of the Restoration.*

Misanthrope, with English scandal as Sheridan represents it, imitating Molière and the *Misanthrope*. Célimène pricks, but does not wound; Lady Sneerwell's friends wound, and leave bloody marks on all the reputations which they handle. The raillery, which I am about to give, is one of Macaulay's tenderest:

'They (the ministers) therefore gave the command to Lord Galway, an experienced veteran, a man who was in war what Molière's doctors were in medicine, who thought it much more honourable to fail according to rule, than to succeed by innovation, and who would have been very much ashamed of himself if he had taken Monjuich by means so strange as those which Peterborough employed. This great commander conducted the campaign of 1707 in the most scientific manner. On the plain of Almanza he encountered the army of the Bourbons. He drew up his troops according to the methods prescribed by the best writers, and in a few hours lost eighteen thousand men, a hundred and twenty standards, all his baggage and all his artillery.'[1]

These roughnesses are all the stronger, because the ordinary tone is noble and serious.

Hitherto we have seen only the reasoner, the scholar, the orator, and the wit: there is still in Macaulay a poet; and if we had not read his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, it would suffice to read a few of his periods, in which the imagination, long held in check by the severity of the proof, breaks out suddenly in splendid metaphors, and expands into magnificent comparisons, worthy by their amplitude of being introduced into an epic:

'Ariosto tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were for ever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!'[2]

These noble words come from the heart; the fount is full, and though it flows, it never becomes dry. As soon as the writer speaks of a cause which he loves, as soon as he sees Liberty rise before him, with Humanity and Justice, Poetry bursts forth spontaneously from his soul, and sets her crown on the brows of her noble sisters:

'The Reformation is an event long past. That volcano has spent its rage. The wide waste produced by its outbreak is forgotten. The landmarks which were swept away have been replaced. The ruined edifices have been repaired. The lava

[1] Macaulay, v. 672; *Lord Mahon's War of the Succession in Spain.*
[2] Macaulay, v. 31; *Milton.*

has covered with a rich incrustation the fields which it once devastated, and, after having turned a beautiful and fruitful garden into a desert, has again turned the desert into a still more beautiful and fruitful garden. The second great eruption is not yet over. The marks of its ravages are still all around us. The ashes are still hot beneath our feet. In some directions, the deluge of fire still continues to spread. Yet experience surely entitles us to believe that this explosion, like that which preceded it, will fertilise the soil which it has devastated. Already, in those parts which have suffered most severely, rich cultivation and secure dwellings have begun to appear amidst the waste. The more we read of the history of past ages, the more we observe the signs of our own times, the more do we feel our hearts filled and swelled up by a good hope for the future destinies of the human race.'[1]

I ought, perhaps, in concluding this analysis, to point out the imperfections caused by these high qualities; how ease, grace, kindly animation, variety, simplicity, pleasantness, are wanting in this manly eloquence, this solid reasoning, and this glowing dialectic; why the art of writing and classical purity are not always found in this partisan, fighting from his platform; in short, why an Englishman is not a Frenchman or an Athenian. I prefer to transcribe another passage, the solemnity and magnificence of which will give some idea of the grave and opulent adornments, which Macaulay throws over his narrative, a sort of potent vegetation, flowers of brilliant purple, like those which are spread over every page of *Paradise Lost* and *Childe Harold*. Warren Hastings had returned from India, and had just been placed on his trial:

'On the thirteenth of February, 1788, the sittings of the Court commenced. There have been spectacles more dazzling to the eye, more gorgeous with jewellery and cloth of gold, more attractive to grown-up children, than that which was then exhibited at Westminster; but, perhaps, there never was a spectacle so well calculated to strike a highly cultivated, a reflecting, an imaginative mind. All the various kinds of interest which belong to the near and to the distant, to the present and to the past, were collected on one spot, and in one hour. All the talents and all the accomplishments which are developed by liberty and civilisation, were now displayed, with every advantage that could be derived both from co-operation and from contrast. Every step in the proceedings carried the mind either backward, through many troubled centuries, to the days when the foundations of our constitution were laid; or far away, over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars, worshipping strange gods, and writing strange characters from right to left. The High Court of Parliament was to sit, according to forms handed down from the days of the Plantagenets, on an Englishman accused of exercising tyranny over the lord of the holy city of Benares, and over the ladies of the princely house of Oude.

'The place was worthy of such a trial. It was the great Hall of William Rufus, the hall which had resounded with acclamations at the inauguration of thirty kings, the hall which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon and the just absolution of Somers, the hall where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party inflamed with just resentment, the hall where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice with the placid courage which has half redeemed his fame. Neither military nor civil pomp was wanting. The

[1] Macaulay, v. 595; *Burleigh and his Times.*

avenues were lined with grenadiers. The streets were kept clear by cavalry. The peers, robed in gold and ermine, were marshalled by the heralds under Garter King-at-arms. The judges in their vestments of state attended to give advice on points of law. Near a hundred and seventy lords, three-fourths of the Upper House as the Upper House then was, walked in solemn order from their usual place of assembling to the tribunal. The junior baron present led the way, George Eliott, Lord Heathfield, recently ennobled for his memorable defence of Gibraltar against the fleets and armies of France and Spain. The long procession was closed by the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of the realm, by the great dignitaries, and by the brothers and sons of the King. Last of all came the Prince of Wales, conspicuous by his fine person and noble bearing. The grey old walls were hung with scarlet. The long galleries were crowded by an audience such as has rarely excited the fears or the emulation of an orator. There were gathered together, from all parts of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and of every art. There were seated round the Queen the fair-haired young daughters of the house of Brunswick. There the Ambassadors of great Kings and Commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present. There Siddons, in the prime of her majestic beauty, looked with emotion on a scene surpassing all the imitations of the stage. There the historian of the Roman Empire thought of the days when Cicero pleaded the cause of Sicily against Verres, and when, before a senate which still retained some show of freedom, Tacitus thundered against the oppressor of Africa. There were seen, side by side, the greatest painter and the greatest scholar of the age. The spectacle had allured Reynolds from that easel which has preserved to us the thoughtful foreheads of so many writers and statesmen, and the sweet smiles of so many noble matrons. It had induced Parr to suspend his labours in that dark and profound mine from which he had extracted a vast treasure of erudition, a treasure too often buried in the earth, too often paraded with injudicious and inelegant ostentation, but still precious, massive, and splendid. There appeared the voluptuous charms of her to whom the heir of the throne had in secret plighted his faith. There too was she, the beautiful mother of a beautiful race, the Saint Cecilia whose delicate features, lighted up by love and music, art has rescued from the common decay. There were the members of that brilliant society which quoted, criticized, and exchanged repartees, under the rich peacock-hangings of Mrs. Montague. And there the ladies whose lips, more persuasive than those of Fox himself, had carried the Westminster election against palace and treasury, shone round Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire.'[1]

This evocation of the national history, glory, and constitution forms a picture of a unique kind. The species of patriotism and poetry which it reveals is an abstract of Macaulay's talent; and the talent, like the picture, is thoroughly English.

VII.

Thus prepared, he entered upon the History of England; and he chose therefrom the period best suited to his political opinions, his style, his passion, his science, the national taste, the sympathy of Europe. He has related the establishment of the English constitution, and con-

[1] Macaulay, vi. 628; *Warren Hastings.*

centrated all the rest of history about this unique event, 'the finest in the world,' to the mind of an Englishman and a politician. He has brought to this work a new method of great beauty, extreme power; its success has been extraordinary. When the second volume appeared, 30,000 copies were ordered beforehand. Let us try to describe this history, to connect it with that method, and that method to that order of mind.

The history is universal, and not broken. It comprehends events of every kind, and treats of them simultaneously. Some have related the history of races, others of classes, others of governments, others of sentiments, ideas, and manners; Macaulay has related all.

'I should very imperfectly execute the task which I have undertaken if I were merely to treat of battles and sieges, of the rise and fall of administrations, of intrigues in the palace, and of debates in the parliament. It will be my endeavour to relate the history of the people as well as the history of the government, to trace the progress of useful and ornamental arts, to describe the rise of religious sects and the changes of literary taste, to portray the manners of successive generations, and not to pass by with neglect even the revolutions which have taken place in dress, furniture, repasts, and public amusements. I shall cheerfully bear the reproach of having descended below the dignity of history, if I can succeed in placing before the English of the nineteenth century a true picture of the life of their ancestors.'[1]

He kept his word. He has separated nothing, and passed nothing by. His portraits are mingled with his narrative. Read those of Danby, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Howe, during the account of a session, between two parliamentary divisions. Short curious anecdotes, domestic details, the description of furniture, intersect, without disjointing, the record of a war. Quitting the narrative of important business, we gladly look upon the Dutch tastes of William, the Chinese museum, the grottos, the mazes, aviaries, ponds, geometrical garden-beds, with which he defaced Hampton Court. A political dissertation precedes or follows the relation of a battle; at other times the author is a tourist or a psychologist before becoming a politician or a tactician. He describes the highlands of Scotland, semi-papistical and semi-pagan, the seers wrapped in bulls' hides to await the moment of inspiration, baptized men making libations of milk or beer to the demons of the place; pregnant women, girls of eighteen, working a wretched patch of oats, whilst their husbands or fathers, athletic men, basked in the sun; robbery and barbarities looked upon as honourable deeds; men stabbed from behind or burnt alive; repulsive food, coarse oats, and cakes, made of the blood of a live cow, offered to guests as a mark of favour and politeness; infected hovels where men lay on the bare ground, and where they woke up half smothered, half blind, and half mad with the itch. The next instant he stops to mark a change in the public taste, the horror

[1] Macaulay, i. 2; *History of England before the Restoration*, ch. i.

then experienced on account of these brigands' retreats, this country of wild rocks and barren moors; the admiration now felt for this land of heroic warriors, this country of grand mountains, seething waterfalls, picturesque defiles. He finds in the progress of physical welfare the causes of this moral revolution, and concludes that, if we praise mountains and a wild life, it is because we are satiated with security. He is successively an economist, a literary man, a publicist, an artist, an historian, a biographer, a story-teller, even a philosopher; by this diversity of parts he imitates the diversity of human life, and presents to the eyes, heart, mind, all the faculties of man, the complete history of the civilisation of his country.

Others, like Hume, have tried or are trying to do it. They set forth now religious matters, a little further political events, then literary details, finally general considerations on the change of society and government, believing that a collection of histories is history, and that parts joined endwise are a body. Macaulay did not believe it, and he did well. Though English, he had the spirit of harmony. So many accumulated events form with him not a total, but a whole. Explanations, accounts, dissertations, anecdotes, illustrations, comparisons, allusions to modern events, all hold together in his book. It is because all hold together in his mind. He had a most lively consciousness of causes; and causes unite facts. By them, scattered events are assembled into a single event; they unite them because they produce them, and the historian, who seeks them all out, cannot fail to perceive or to feel the unity which is their effect. Read, for instance, the voyage of James II. to Ireland: no picture is more curious. Is it, however, nothing more than a curious picture? When the king arrived at Cork, there were no horses to be found. The country is a desert. No more industry, cultivation, civilisation, since the English and Protestant colonists were driven out, robbed, slain. James was received between two hedges of Rapparees, armed with skeans, stakes, and half-pikes; under his horse's feet they spread by way of carpet the rough frieze mantles, such as the brigands and shepherds wore. He was offered garlands of cabbage stalks for crowns of laurel. In a large district he only found two carts. The palace of the lord-lieutenant in Dublin was so ill built, that the rain drenched the rooms. The king left for Ulster; the French officers thought they were travelling 'through the deserts of Arabia.' The Count d'Avaux wrote to the French court, that, to get a truss of hay, they had to send five or six miles. At Charlemont, with great difficulty, as a mark of high favour, they obtained a sack of groats for the French embassy. The superior officers lay in dens which they would have thought too foul for their dogs. The Irish soldiers were half-savage marauders, who could only shout, cut throats, and disband. Ill fed on potatoes and sour milk, they cast themselves like starved men on the great flocks belonging to the Protestants. They greedily tore the flesh of oxen and sheep, and swallowed it half raw and

half rotten. For lack of kettles, they cooked it in the skin. When Lent began, the plunderers generally ceased to devour, but continued to destroy. A peasant would kill a cow merely in order to get a pair of brogues. At times a band slaughtered fifty or sixty beasts, took the skins, and left the bodies to poison the air. The French ambassador reckoned that in six weeks, there had been slain 50,000 horned cattle, which were rotting on the ground. They counted the number of the sheep and lambs slain at 400,000. Cannot the result of the rebellion be seen beforehand? What could be expected of these gluttonous serfs, so stupid and savage? What could be drawn from a devastated land, peopled with robbers? To what kind of discipline could these marauders and butchers be subjected? What resistance will they make on the Boyne, when they see William's old regiments, the furious squadrons of French refugees, the enraged and insulted Protestants of Londonderry and Enniskillen, leap into the river and run with uplifted swords against their muskets? They will flee, the king at their head; and the minute anecdotes, scattered amidst the account of receptions, voyages, and ceremonies, will have announced the victory of the Protestants. The history of manners is thus seen to be involved in the history of events; these cause the others, and the description explains the narrative.

It is not enough to see causes; we must also see many. Every event has a multitude of them. Is it enough for me, if I wish to understand the action of Marlborough or of James, to be reminded of a disposition or a quality which explains it? No; for, since it has for a cause a whole situation and a whole character, I must see at one glance and in abstract the whole character and situation which have produced it. Genius concentrates. It is measured by the number of recollections and ideas which it assembles in one point. That which Macaulay has assembled, is enormous. I know no historian who has a surer, better furnished, better regulated memory. When he is relating the actions of a man or a party, he sees in an instant all the events of his history, and all the maxims of his conduct; he has all the details present; he remembers them every moment, in great numbers. He has forgotten nothing; he runs through them as easily, as completely, as surely, as on the day when he enumerated or wrote them. No one has so well taught or known history. He is as much steeped in it as his personages. The ardent Whig or Tory, experienced, trained to business, who rose and shook the House, had not more numerous, better arranged, more precise arguments. He did not better know the strength and weakness of his cause; he was not more familiar with the intrigues, rancours, variation of parties, the chances of the strife, individual and public interests. The great novelists penetrate the soul of their characters, assume their feelings, ideas, language; it seems as if Balzac had been a commercial traveller, a porter, a courtesan, a prude, a poet, and that he had spent his life in being each of these personages: his existence is multiplied, and his name is legion. With a different talent, Macaulay has the same

power: an incomparable advocate, he pleads an infinite number of causes; and he is master of each cause, as fully as his client. He has answers for all objections, explanations for all obscurities, reasons for all tribunals. He is ready at every moment, and on all parts of his case. It seems as if he had been Whig, Tory, Puritan, Member of the Privy Council, Ambassador. He is not a poet like Michelet; he is not a philosopher like Guizot; but he possesses so well all the oratorical powers, he accumulates and arranges so many facts, he holds them so closely in his hand, he manages them with so much ease and vigour, that he succeeds in recomposing the whole and harmonious woof of history, not losing or separating one thread. The poet reanimates the dead; the philosopher formulates creative laws; the orator knows, expounds, and pleads causes. The poet resuscitates souls, the philosopher composes a system, the orator redisposes chains of arguments; but all three march towards the same end by different routes, and the orator, like his rivals, and by other means than his rivals, reproduces in his work the unity and complexity of life.

A second character of this history is clearness. It is popular; no one explains better, or so much, as Macaulay. It seems as if he were making a wager with his reader, and said to him: Be as absent in mind, as stupid, as ignorant as you please; in vain you will be absent in mind, you shall listen to me; in vain you will be stupid, you shall understand; in vain you will be ignorant, you shall learn. I will repeat the same idea in so many different forms. I will make it sensible by such familiar and precise examples, I will announce it so clearly at the beginning, I will resume it so carefully at the end, I will mark the divisions so well, follow the order of ideas so exactly, I will display so great a desire to enlighten and convince you, that you cannot help being enlightened and convinced. He certainly thought thus, when he was preparing the following passage on the law which, for the first time, granted to Dissenters the liberty of exercising their worship:

'Of all the Acts that have ever been passed by Parliament, the Toleration Act is perhaps that which most strikingly illustrates the peculiar vices and the peculiar excellences of English legislation. The science of Politics bears in one respect a close analogy to the science of Mechanics. The mathematician can easily demonstrate that a certain power, applied by means of a certain lever or of a certain system of pulleys, will suffice to raise a certain weight. But his demonstration proceeds on the supposition that the machinery is such as no load will bend or break. If the engineer, who has to lift a great mass of real granite by the instrumentality of real timber and real hemp, should absolutely rely on the propositions which he finds in treatises on Dynamics, and should make no allowance for the imperfection of his materials, his whole apparatus of beams, wheels, and ropes would soon come down in ruin, and, with all his geometrical skill, he would be found a far inferior builder to those painted barbarians who, though they never heard of the parallelogram of forces, managed to pile up Stonehenge. What the engineer is to the mathematician, the active statesman is to the contemplative statesman. It is indeed most important that legislators and administrators should be versed in the philosophy

of government, as it is most important that the architect, who has to fix an obelisk on its pedestal, or to hang a tubular bridge over an estuary, should be versed in the philosophy of equilibrium and motion. But, as he who has actually to build must bear in mind many things never noticed by D'Alembert and Euler, so must he who has actually to govern be perpetually guided by considerations to which no allusion can be found in the writings of Adam Smith or Jeremy Bentham. The perfect lawgiver is a just temper between the mere man of theory, who can see nothing but general principles, and the mere man of business, who can see nothing but particular circumstances. Of lawgivers in whom the speculative element has prevailed to the exclusion of the practical, the world has during the last eighty years been singularly fruitful. To their wisdom Europe and America have owed scores of abortive constitutions, scores of constitutions which have lived just long enough to make a miserable noise, and have then gone off in convulsions. But in English legislation the practical element has always predominated, and not seldom unduly predominated, over the speculative. To think nothing of symmetry and much of convenience; never to remove an anomaly merely because it is an anomaly; never to innovate except when some grievance is felt; never to innovate except so far as to get rid of the grievance; never to lay down any proposition of wider extent than the particular case for which it is necessary to provide; these are the rules which have, from the age of John to the age of Victoria, generally guided the deliberations of our two hundred and fifty Parliaments.'[1]

Is the idea still obscure or doubtful? Does it still need proofs, illustrations? Do we wish for anything more? You answer No; Macaulay answers Yes. After the general explication comes the particular; after the theory, the application; after the theoretical demonstration, the practical. We would fain stop; but he proceeds:

'The Toleration Act approaches very near to the idea of a great English law. To a jurist, versed in the theory of legislation, but not intimately acquainted with the temper of the sects and parties into which the nation was divided at the time of the Revolution, that Act would seem to be a mere chaos of absurdities and contradictions. It will not bear to be tried by sound general principles. Nay, it will not bear to be tried by any principle, sound or unsound. The sound principle undoubtedly is, that mere theological error ought not to be punished by the civil magistrate. This principle the Toleration Act not only does not recognise, but positively disclaims. Not a single one of the cruel laws enacted against nonconformists by the Tudors or the Stuarts is repealed. Persecution continues to be the general rule. Toleration is the exception. Nor is this all. The freedom which is given to conscience is given in the most capricious manner. A Quaker, by making a declaration of faith in general terms, obtains the full benefit of the Act without signing one of the thirty-nine Articles. An Independent minister, who is perfectly willing to make the declaration required from the Quaker, but who has doubts about six or seven of the Articles, remains still subject to the penal laws. Howe is liable to punishment if he preaches before he has solemnly declared his assent to the Anglican doctrine touching the Eucharist. Penn, who altogether rejects the Eucharist, is at perfect liberty to preach without making any declaration whatever on the subject.

'These are some of the obvious faults which must strike every person who exa-

[1] Macaulay, ii. 463, *History of England*, ch. xi.

mines the Toleration Act by that standard of just reason which is the same in all countries and in all ages. But these very faults may perhaps appear to be merits, when we take into consideration the passions and prejudices of those for whom the Toleration Act was framed. This law, abounding with contradictions which every smatterer in political philosophy can detect, did what a law framed by the utmost skill of the greatest masters of political philosophy might have failed to do. That the provisions which have been recapitulated are cumbrous, puerile, inconsistent with each other, inconsistent with the true theory of religious liberty, must be acknowledged. All that can be said in their defence is this; that they removed a vast mass of evil without shocking a vast mass of prejudice; that they put an end, at once and for ever, without one division in either House of Parliament, without one riot in the streets, with scarcely one audible murmur even from the classes most deeply tainted with bigotry, to a persecution which had raged during four generations, which had broken innumerable hearts, which had made innumerable firesides desolate, which had filled the prisons with men of whom the world was not worthy, which had driven thousands of those honest, diligent, and godfearing yeomen and artisans, who are the true strength of a nation, to seek a refuge beyond the ocean among the wigwams of red Indians and the lairs of panthers. Such a defence, however weak it may appear to some shallow speculators, will probably be thought complete by statesmen.'[1]

For my part, that which I find complete in this, is the art of development. This antithesis of ideas, sustained by the antithesis of words, the symmetrical periods, the expressions designedly repeated to attract the attention, the exhaustion of proof, set before our eyes the special-pleader's and oratorical talent, which we just before encountered in the art of pleading all causes, of employing an infinite number of methods, of mastering them all and always, during every incident of the lawsuit. The final manifestation of a mind of this sort are the faults into which its talent draws it. By dint of development, he protracts. More than once his explications are commonplace. He proves what all allow. He enlightens what is light. There is a passage on the necessity of reactions which reads like the verbosity of a clever schoolboy. Others, excellent and novel, can only be read with pleasure once. On the second reading they appear too true; we have seen it all at a glance, and are wearied. I have omitted one-third of the passage on the Act of Toleration, and acute minds will think that I ought to have omitted another third.

The last feature, the most singular, the least English of this History, is, that it is interesting. Macaulay wrote, in the *Edinburgh Review*, several volumes of Essays; and every one knows that the first merit of a reviewer or a journalist, is to make himself readable. A thick volume naturally bores us; it is not thick for nothing; its bulk demands at the outset the attention of him who opens it. The solid binding, the table of contents, the preface, the substantial chapters, drawn up like soldiers in battle-array, all bid us take an arm-chair, put on a dressing-gown, place our feet on the bars, and study; we owe no less to the grave man who presents himself to us, armed with 600 pages of text

[1] Macaulay, ii. 465, *History of England*, ch. xi.

and three years of reflection. But a newspaper which we glance at in a club, a review which we finger in a drawing-room in the evening, before sitting down to dinner, must needs attract the eyes, overcome absence of mind, conquer newspaper readers. Macaulay attained, through practice, this gift of readableness, and he retains in his History the habits which he had acquired in the newspapers. He employs every means of keeping up attention, good or indifferent, worthy or unworthy of a great talent; amongst others, allusion to actual circumstances. You may have heard the saying of an editor, to whom Pierre Leroux offered an article on God. 'God! there is no actuality about it!' Macaulay profits by this remark. He never forgets the actual. If he mentions a regiment, he points out in a few lines the splendid deeds which it has done since its formation up to our own day: thus the officers of this regiment, encamped in the Crimea, stationed at Malta, or at Calcutta, are obliged to read his History. He relates the reception of Schomberg in the House: who is interested in Schomberg? Forthwith he adds that Wellington, a hundred years later, was received, under like circumstances, with a ceremony copied from the first: what Englishman is not interested in Wellington? He relates the siege of Londonderry, he points out the spot which the ancient bastions occupy in the present town, the field which was covered by the Irish camp, the well at which the besiegers drank: what citizen of Londonderry can help buying his book? Whatever town he comes upon, he notes the changes which it has undergone, the new streets added, the buildings repaired or constructed, the increase of commerce, the introduction of new industries: hence all the aldermen and merchants are constrained to subscribe to his work. Elsewhere we find an anecdote of an actor and actress: as the superlative degree is interesting, he begins by saying that William Mountford was the most agreeable comedian, that Anne Bracegirdle was the most popular actress, of the time. If he introduces a statesman, he always announces him by some great word: he was the most insinuating, or the most equitable, or the best informed, or the most eager and the most debauched, of all the politicians of the day. But his great qualities serve him as well in this matter as his literary machinery, a little too manifest, a little too copious, a little too coarse. The astonishing number of details, the medley of psychological and moral dissertations, descriptions, relations, opinions, pleadings, portraits, beyond all, good composition and the continuous stream of eloquence, seize and retain the attention to the end. We have hard work to finish a volume of Lingard or Robertson; we should have hard work not to finish a volume of Macaulay.

Here is a detached narration which shows very well, and in the abstract, the means of interesting which he employs, and the great interest which he excites. The subject is the Massacre of Glencoe. Macaulay begins by describing the spot like a traveller who has seen it, and points it out to the bands of tourists and dilettanti, historians and antiquarians, who yearly issue from London:

'Mac Ian dwelt in the mouth of a ravine situated not far from the southern shore of Loch Levin, an arm of the sea which deeply indents the western coast of Scotland, and separates Argyleshire from Inverness-shire. Near his house were two or three small hamlets inhabited by his tribe. The whole population which he governed was not supposed to exceed two hundred souls. In the neighbourhood of the little cluster of villages was some copsewood and some pasture land: but a little further up the defile no sign of population or of fruitfulness was to be seen. In the Gaelic tongue, Glencoe signifies the Glen of Weeping: and, in truth, that pass is the most dreary and melancholy of all the Scottish passes, the very Valley of the Shadow of Death. Mists and storms brood over it through the greater part of the finest summer; and even on those rare days when the sun is bright, and when there is no cloud in the sky, the impression made by the landscape is sad and awful. The path lies along a stream which issues from the most sullen and gloomy of mountain pools. Huge precipices of naked stone frown on both sides. Even in July the streaks of snow may often be discerned in the rifts near the summits. All down the sides of the crags heaps of ruin mark the headlong paths of the torrents. Mile after mile the traveller looks in vain for the smoke of one hut, or for one human form wrapped in a plaid, and listens in vain for the bark of a shepherd's dog or the bleat of a lamb. Mile after mile the only sound that indicates life is the faint cry of a bird of prey from some stormbeaten pinnacle of rock. The progress of civilisation, which has turned so many wastes into fields yellow with harvests or gay with apple blossoms, has only made Glencoe more desolate. All the science and industry of a peaceful age can extract nothing valuable from that wilderness: but, in an age of violence and rapine, the wilderness itself was valued on account of the shelter which it afforded to the plunderer and his plunder.'[1]

The description, though very beautiful, is written for a demonstration. The final antithesis explains it; the author has made it to show that the Campbells were the greatest brigands of the country.

The Master of Stair, who represented William in Scotland, relying on the fact that Mac Ian had not taken the oath of allegiance on the appointed day, determined to destroy the chief and his clan. He was not urged by hereditary hate nor by private interest; he was a man of taste, polished and amiable. He did this crime out of humanity, persuaded that there was no other way of pacifying the Highlands. Thereupon Macaulay inserts a dissertation of four pages, very well written, full of interest and knowledge, whose diversity affords us rest, which leads us over all kinds of historical examples, and moral lessons:

'We daily see men do for their party, for their sect, for their country, for their favourite schemes of political and social reform, what they would not do to enrich or to avenge themselves. At a temptation directly addressed to our private cupidity or to our private animosity, whatever virtue we have takes the alarm. But virtue itself may contribute to the fall of him who imagines that it is in his power, by violating some general rule of morality, to confer an important benefit on a church, on a commonwealth, on mankind. He silences the remonstrances of conscience, and hardens his heart against the most touching spectacles of misery, by repeating to himself that his intentions are pure, that his objects are noble,

[1] Macaulay, iii. 513; *History of England*, ch. xviii.

that he is doing a little evil for the sake of a great good. By degrees he comes altogether to forget the turpitude of the means in the excellence of the end, and at length perpetrates without one internal twinge acts which would shock a buccaneer. There is no reason to believe that Dominic would, for the best archbishopric in Christendom, have incited ferocious marauders to plunder and slaughter a peaceful and industrious population, that Everard Digby would, for a dukedom, have blown a large assembly of people into the air, or that Robespierre would have murdered for hire one of the thousands whom he murdered from philanthropy.'[1]

Do we not recognise here the Englishman brought up on psychological and moral essays and sermons, who involuntarily and every instant spreads one over the paper? This species is unknown in French lecture-rooms and reviews; this is why it is unknown in French histories. When we wish to enter English history, we have only to step down from the pulpit and the newspaper.

I do not transcribe the sequel of the explanation, the examples of James v., Sixtus v., and so many others, whom Macaulay cites to find precedents for the Master of Stair. Then follows a very circumstantial and very solid discussion, to prove that William was not responsible for the massacre. It is clear that Macaulay's object, here as elsewhere, is less to draw a picture than to suggest a judgment. He desires that we should have an opinion on the morality of the act, that we should attribute it to its real authors, that each should bear exactly his own share, and no more. A little further, when the question of the punishment of the crime arises, and William, having severely chastised the executioners, contents himself with recalling the Master of Stair, Macaulay writes a dissertation of several pages to consider this injustice and to blame the king. Here, as elsewhere, he is still the orator and the moralist; no means has more power to interest an English reader. Happily for us, he at length becomes once more a narrator; the petty details which he then selects fix the attention, and place the scene before our eyes:

'The sight of the red coats approaching caused some anxiety among the population of the valley. John, the eldest son of the Chief, came, accompanied by twenty clansmen, to meet the strangers, and asked what this visit meant. Lieutenant Lindsay answered that the soldiers came as friends, and wanted nothing but quarters. They were kindly received, and were lodged under the thatched roofs of the little community. Glenlyon and several of his men were taken into the house of a tacksman who was named from the cluster of cabins over which he exercised authority, Inverriggen. Lindsay was accommodated nearer to the abode of the old chief. Auchintriater, one of the principal men of the clan, who governed the small hamlet of Auchnaion, found room there for a party commanded by a serjeant named Barbour. Provisions were liberally supplied. There was no want of beef, which had probably fattened in distant pastures: nor was any payment demanded: for in hospitality, as in thievery, the Gaelic marauders rivalled the Bedouins. During twelve days the soldiers

[1] Macaulay, iii. 519; *History of England*, ch. xviii.

lived familiarly with the people of the glen. Old Mac Ian, who had before felt many misgivings as to the relation in which he stood to the government, seems to have been pleased with the visit. The officers passed much of their time with him and his family. The long evenings were cheerfully spent by the peat fire with the help of some packs of cards which had found their way to that remote corner of the world, and of some French brandy which was probably part of James' farewell gift to his Highland supporters. Glenlyon appeared to be warmly attached to his niece and her husband Alexander. Every day he came to their house to take his morning draught. Meanwhile he observed with minute attention all the avenues by which, when the signal for the slaughter should be given, the Macdonalds might attempt to escape to the hills; and he reported the result of his observations to Hamilton. . . .

'The night was rough. Hamilton and his troops made slow progress, and were long after their time. While they were contending with the wind and snow, Glenlyon was supping and playing at cards with those whom he meant to butcher before daybreak. He and Lieutenant Lindsay had engaged themselves to dine with the old Chief on the morrow.

'Late in the evening a vague suspicion that some evil was intended crossed the mind of the Chief's eldest son. The soldiers were evidently in a restless state; and some of them uttered strange exclamations. Two men, it is said, were overheard whispering. "I do not like this job," one of them muttered; "I should be glad to fight the Macdonalds. But to kill men in their beds—" "We must do as we are bid," answered another voice. "If there is anything wrong, our officers must answer for it." John Macdonald was so uneasy, that, soon after midnight, he went to Glenlyon's quarters. Glenlyon and his men were all up, and seemed to be getting their arms ready for action. John, much alarmed, asked what these preparations meant. Glenlyon was profuse of friendly assurances. "Some of Glengarry's people have been harrying the country. We are getting ready to march against them. You are quite safe. Do you think that, if you were in any danger, I should not have given a hint to your brother Sandy and his wife?" John's suspicions were quieted. He returned to his house, and lay down to rest.'[1]

On the next day, at five in the morning, the old chieftain was assassinated, his men shot in their beds or by the fireside. Women were butchered; a boy, twelve years old, who begged his life on his knees, was slain; they who fled half-naked, women and children, died of cold and hunger in the snow.

These precise details, these soldiers' conversations, this picture of evenings by the fireside, give to history the animation and life of a novel. And still the historian remains an orator: for he has chosen all these facts to exhibit the perfidy of the assassins and the horrible nature of the massacre; and he will make use of them later on, to demand, with all the power and passion of logic, the punishment of the criminals.

VIII.

Thus this History, whose qualities seem so little English, bears throughout the mark of a genuinely English talent. Universal, con-

[1] Macaulay, iii. 526; *History of England*, ch. xviii.

nected, it embraces all the facts in its vast, undivided, and unbroken woof. Developed, abundant, it enlightens obscure facts, and opens to the most ignorant the most complicated questions. Interesting, varied, it attracts and preserves the attention. It has life, clearness, unity, qualities which appear to be wholly French. It seems as if the author were a populariser like Thiers, a philosopher like Guizot, an artist like Thierry. The truth is, that he is an orator, and that after the fashion of his country; but, as he possesses in the highest degree the oratorical faculties, and possesses them with a national tendency and instincts, he seems to supplement through them the faculties which he has not. He is not genuinely philosophical: the mediocrity of his earlier chapters on the ancient history of England proves this sufficiently; but his force of reasoning, his habits of classification and order, bestow unity upon his History. He is not a genuine artist: when he draws a picture, he is always thinking of proving something; he inserts dissertations in the most interesting and touching places; he has neither grace, lightness, vivacity, nor refinement, but a marvellous memory, vast knowledge, an ardent political passion, a great legal talent for expounding and pleading every cause, a precise knowledge of precise and petty facts which rivet the attention, charm, diversify, animate, and warm a narrative. He is not simply a populariser; he is too ardent, too eager to prove, to conquer belief, to beat down his foes, to have only the limpid talent of a man who explains and expounds, with no other end than to explain and expound, which spreads light throughout, and never spreads heat; but he is so well provided with details and reasons, so anxious to convince, so rich in developments, that he cannot fail to be popular. By this breadth of knowledge, this power of reasoning and passion, he has produced one of the finest books of the age, whilst manifesting the genius of his nation. This solidity, this energy, this deep political passion, these moral prejudices, these oratorical habits, this limited philosophical power, this partially uniform style, without flexibility or sweetness, this eternal gravity, this geometrical progress to a settled end, announce in him the English mind. But if he is English to the French, he is not so to his nation. The animation, interest, clearness, unity of his narrative, astonish them. They think him brilliant, rapid, bold; it is, they say, a French mind. Doubtless he is so in many respects: if he understands Racine badly, he admires Pascal and Bossuet; his friends say that he used daily to read Madame de Sévigné. Nay more, by the structure of his mind, by his eloquence and rhetoric, he is Latin; so that the inner structure of his talent places him amongst the classics: it is only by his lively appreciation of special, complex, and sensible facts, by his energy and rudeness, by the rather heavy richness of his imagination, by the depth of his colouring, that he belongs to his race. Like Addison and Burke, he resembles a strange graft, fed and transformed by the sap of the national stock. At all events, this judgment is

the strongest mark of the difference between the two nations. To reach the English intellect, a Frenchman must make two voyages. When he has crossed the first interval, which is wide, he comes upon Macaulay. Let him re-embark; he must accomplish a second passage, just as long, to arrive at Carlyle for instance,—a mind fundamentally Germanic, on the genuine English soil

CHAPTER IV.

Philosophy and History.—Carlyle.

§ 1.—Style and Mind.

ECCENTRIC AND IMPORTANT POSITION OF CARLYLE IN ENGLAND.

I. His strangenesses, obscurities, violence—Fancy and enthusiasm—Rudeness and buffooneries.

II. Humour—Wherein it consists—It is Germanic—Grotesque and tragic pictures—Dandies and Poor Slaves—The Pigs' Catechism—Extreme tension of his mind and nerves.

III. Barriers which hold and direct him—Perception of the real and of the sublime.

IV. His passion for exact and demonstrated fact—His search after extinguished feelings—Vehemence of his emotion and sympathy—Intensity of belief and vision—*Past and Present*—*Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*—Historical mysticism—Grandeur and sadness of his visions—How he represents the world after his own mind.

V. Every object is a group, and every employment of human thought is the reproduction of a group—Two principal modes of reproducing it, and two principal modes of mind—Classification—Intuition—Inconvenience of the second process—It is obscure, hazardous, destitute of proofs—It tends to affectation and exaggeration—Hardness and presumption which it provokes—Advantages of this kind of mind—Alone capable of reproducing the object—Most favourable to original invention—The use made of it by Carlyle.

§ 2.—Vocation.

INTRODUCTION OF GERMAN IDEAS IN EUROPE AND ENGLAND—GERMAN STUDIES OF CARLYLE.

I. Appearance of original forms of mind—How they act and result—Artistic genius of the Renaissance—Oratorical genius of the classic age—Philosophical genius of the modern age—Probable analogy of the three ages

II. Wherein consists the modern and German form of mind—How the aptitude for universal ideas has renewed the science of language, mythology, æsthetics, history, exegesis, theology, and metaphysics—How the metaphysical bent has transformed poetry.

III. Capital idea derived thence—Conception of essential and complementary parts—New conception of nature and man.

IV. Inconvenience of this aptitude—Gratuitous hypothesis and vague abstraction—Transient discredit of German speculations.

V. How each nation may re-forge them—Ancient examples: Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—The Puritans and Jansenists in the

seventeenth century—France in the eighteenth century—By what roads these ideas may enter France—Positivism—Criticism.

VI. By what roads these ideas may enter England—Exact and positive mind—Impassioned and poetic inspiration—Road followed by Carlyle.

§ 3.—Philosophy, Morality, and Criticism.

HIS METHOD IS MORAL, NOT SCIENTIFIC—WHEREIN HE RESEMBLES THE PURITANS—SARTOR RESARTUS.

I. Sensible things are but appearances—Divine and mysterious character of existence—His metaphysics.

II. How we may form into one another, positive, poetic, spiritualistic, and mystical ideas—How in Carlyle German metaphysics are altered into English Puritanism.

III. Moral character of this mysticism—Conception of duty—Conception of God.

IV. Conception of Christianity—Genuine and conventional Christianity—Other religions—Limit and scope of doctrine.

V. Criticism—What weight it gives to writers—What class of writers it exalts—What class of writers it depreciates—His æsthetics—His judgment of Voltaire.

VI. Future of criticism—Wherein it is contrary to the prejudices of the age and of its vocation—Taste has but a relative authority.

§ 4.—Conception of History.

I. Supreme importance of great men—They are revealers—They must be venerated.

II. Connection between this and the German conception—Wherein Carlyle is imitative—Wherein he is original—Scope of his conception.

III. How genuine history is that of heroic sentiments—Genuine historians are artists and psychologists.

IV. His history of Cromwell—Why it is only composed of texts connected by a commentary—Its novelty and worth—How we should consider Cromwell and the Puritans—Importance of Puritanism in modern civilisation—Carlyle admires it unreservedly.

V. His history of the French Revolution—Severity of his judgment—Wherein he has sight of the truth, and wherein he is unjust.

VI. His judgment of modern England—Against the taste for comfort and the lukewarmness of convictions—Gloomy forebodings for the future of modern democracy—Against the authority of votes—Monarchical theory.

VII. Criticism of these theories—Dangers of enthusiasm—Comparison of Carlyle and Macaulay.

WHEN you ask Englishmen, especially those under forty, who amongst them are the thinking men, they first mention Carlyle; but at the same time they advise you not to read him, warning you that you will not understand him at all. Then, of course, we hasten to get the twenty volumes of Carlyle—criticism, history, pamphlets, fantasies, philosophy; we read them with very strange emotions, contradicting every morning our opinion of the night before.

We discover at last that we are in presence of an extraordinary animal, a relic of a lost family, a sort of mastodon, lost in a world, not made for him. We rejoice in this zoological good luck, and dissect him with minute curiosity, telling ourselves that we shall probably never find another animal like him.

§ 1.—Style and Mind.

We are at first put out. All is new here—ideas, style, tone, the shape of the phrases, and the very vocabulary. He takes everything in a contrary meaning, does violence to everything, expressions and things. With him paradoxes are set down for principles; common sense takes the form of absurdity. We are, as it were, carried into an unknown world, whose inhabitants walk head downwards, feet in the air, dressed in motley, as great lords and maniacs, with contortions, jerks, and cries; we are grievously stunned by these extravagant and discordant sounds; we want to stop our ears, we have a headache, we are obliged to decipher a new language. We see upon the table volumes which ought to be as clear as possible—*The History of the French Revolution*, for instance; and there we read these headings to the chapters: 'Realised Ideals—Viaticum—Astræa Redux—Petition in Hieroglyphs—Windbags—Mercury de Brézé—Broglie the War-God.' We ask ourselves what connection there can be between these riddles and such simple events as we all know. We then perceive that Carlyle always speaks in riddles. 'Logic-choppers' is the name he gives to the analysts of the eighteenth century; 'Beaver science' is his word for the catalogues and classifications of our modern men of science. 'Transcendental moonshine' signifies the philosophical and sentimental dreams imported from Germany. The religion of the 'rotatory calabash' means external and mechanical religion.[1] He cannot be contented with a simple expression; he employs figures at every step; he embodies all his ideas; he must touch forms. We see that he is besieged and haunted by sparkling or gloomy visions; every thought with him is a shock; a stream of misty passion comes bubbling into his overflowing brain, and the torrent of images breaks forth and rolls on amidst every kind of mud and magnificence. He cannot reason, he must paint. If he wants to explain the embarrassment of a young man obliged to choose a career amongst the lusts and doubts of the age, in which we live, he tells you of:

> 'A world all rocking and plunging, like that old Roman one when the measure of its iniquities was full; the abysses, and subterranean and supernal deluges, plainly broken loose; in the wild dim-lighted chaos all stars of Heaven gone out. No star of Heaven visible, hardly now to any man; the pestiferous fogs and foul exhalations grown continual, have, except on the highest mountain-tops, blotted

[1] Because the Kalmucks put written prayers into a calabash turned by the wind, which in their opinion produces a perpetual adoration. In the same way are the prayer-mills of Thibet used.

out all stars: will-o'-wisps, of various course and colour, take the place of stars. Over the wild surging chaos, in the leaden air, are only sudden glares of revolutionary lightning; then mere darkness, with philanthropistic phosphorescences, empty meteoric lights; here and there an ecclesiastical luminary still hovering, hanging on to its old quaking fixtures, pretending still to be a Moon or Sun,—though visibly it is but a Chinese Lantern made of *paper* mainly, with candle-end foully dying in the heart of it.'[1]

Imagine a volume, twenty volumes, made up of such pictures, united by exclamations and apostrophes; even history—that of the *French Revolution*—is like a delirium. Carlyle is a Puritan seer, before whose eyes pass scaffolds, orgies, massacres, battles, and who, besieged by furious or bloody phantoms, prophesies, encourages, or curses. If you do not throw down the book from anger or weariness, you will lose your judgment; your ideas depart, nightmare seizes you, a medley of contracted and ferocious figures whirl about in your head; you hear the howls of insurrection, cries of war; you are sick; you are like those listeners to the Covenanters, whom the preaching filled with disgust or enthusiasm, and who broke the head of their prophet, if they did not take him for their leader.

These violent outbursts will seem to you still more violent if you mark the breadth of the field which they traverse. From the sublime to the ignoble, from the pathetic to the grotesque, is but a step with Carlyle. With the same stroke he touches the two extremes. His adorations end in sarcasms. The Universe is for him an oracle and a temple, as well as a kitchen and a stable. He moves freely about, and is at his ease in mysticism, as well as in brutality. Speaking of the setting sun at the North Cape, he writes:

'Silence as of death; for Midnight, even in the Arctic latitudes, has its character: nothing but the granite cliffs ruddy-tinged, the peaceable gurgle of that slow-heaving Polar Ocean, over which in the utmost North the great Sun hangs low and lazy, as if he too were slumbering. Yet is his cloud-couch wrought of crimson and cloth-of-gold; yet does his light stream over the mirror of waters, like a tremulous fire-pillar, shooting downwards to the abyss, and hide itself under my feet. In such moments, Solitude also is invaluable; for who would speak, or be looked on, when behind him lies all Europe and Africa, fast asleep, except the watchmen; and before him the silent Immensity, and Palace of the Eternal, whereof our Sun is but a porch-lamp?'[2]

Such splendours he sees whenever he is face to face with nature. No one has contemplated with a more powerful emotion the silent stars which roll eternally in the pale firmament and envelop our little world. No one has contemplated with more of religious awe the infinite obscurity in which our slender thought appears for an instant like a gleam, and by our side the gloomy abyss in which the hot frenzy of life is to be extinguished. His eyes are habitually fixed on this

[1] The *Life of John Sterling*, ch. v.; *A Profession.*

[2] *Sartor Resartus*, 1868, bk. ii. ch. viii.; *Centre of Indifference.*

vast Darkness, and he paints with a shudder of veneration and hope the effort which religions have made to pierce them:

'In the heart of the remotest mountains rises the little Kirk; the Dead all slumbering round it, under their white memorial stones, "in hope of a happy resurrection:"—dull wert thou, O Reader, if never in any hour (say of moaning midnight, when such Kirk hung spectral in the sky, and Being was as if swallowed up of Darkness) it spoke to thee—things unspeakable, that went to thy soul's soul. Strong was he that had a Church, what we can call a Church: he stood thereby, though "in the centre of Immensities, in the conflux of Eternities," yet manlike towards God and man: the vague shoreless Universe had become for him a firm city, and dwelling which he knew.'[1]

Rembrandt alone has beheld these sombre visions drowned in shade, traversed by mystic rays: look, for example, at the church which he has painted; glance at the mysterious floating apparition, full of radiant forms, which he has set in the summit of the sky, above the stormy night and the terror which shakes mortality.[2] The two imaginations have the same painful grandeur, the same scintillations, the same agony, and both sink with like facility into triviality and crudity. No ulcer, no filth, is repulsive enough to disgust Carlyle. On occasion, he will compare the politician who seeks popularity to 'the dog that was drowned last summer, and that floats up and down the Thames with ebb and flood. . . . You get to know him by sight . . . with a painful oppression of nose . . . Daily you may see him, . . . and daily the odour of him is getting more intolerable.'[3] Absurdities, incongruities, abound in his style. When the frivolous Cardinal de Loménie proposed to convoke a Plenary Court, he compares him to 'trained canary birds, that would fly cheerfully with lighted matches and fire cannon; fire whole powder magazines.'[4] At need, he turns to clownish images. He ends a dithyramb with a caricature: he bespatters magnificence with wild fooleries: he couples poetry with rude jests:

'The Genius of England no longer soars Sunward, world defiant, like an Eagle through the storms, "mewing her mighty youth," as John Milton saw her do: the Genius of England, much liker a greedy Ostrich intent on provender and a whole skin mainly, stands with its *other* extremity Sunward; with its Ostrich-head stuck into the readiest bush, of old Church-tippets, King-cloaks, or what other "sheltering Fallacy" there may be, and *so* awaits the issue. The issue has been slow; but it is now seen to have been inevitable. No Ostrich, intent on gross terrene provender, and sticking its head into Fallacies, but will be awakened one day,—in a terrible *à-posteriori* manner, if not otherwise!'[5]

With such buffoonery he concludes his best book, never quitting his tone of gravity and gloom, in the midst of anathemas and prophecies.

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[1] *History of the French Revolution*, bk. i. ch. ii.; *Realised Ideals.*
[2] In the *Adoration of the Magi.*
[3] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 1850; *Stump Orator*, 35.
[4] *The French Revolution*, i. bk. iii. ch. vii.; *Internecine.*
[5] *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. x.; the end.

He needs these great shocks. He cannot remain quiet, or stick to one literary province at a time. He leaps in unimpeded jerks from one end of the field of ideas to the other; he confounds all styles, jumbles all forms, heaps together pagan allusions, Bible reminiscences, German abstractions, technical terms, poetry, slang, mathematics, physiology, archaic words, neologies. There is nothing he does not tread down and ravage. The symmetrical constructions of human art and thought, dispersed and upset, are piled under his hands into a vast mass of shapeless ruins, from the top of which he gesticulates and fights, like a conquering savage.

II.

This kind of mind produces humour, a word untranslateable in French, because in France they have not the idea. Humour is a species of talent which amuses Germans, Northmen; it suits their mind, as beer suits their palate. For men of another race it is disagreeable; they often find it too harsh and bitter. Amongst other things, this talent embraces a taste for contrasts. Swift jokes with the serious mien of an ecclesiastic, performing religious rites, and develops the most grotesque absurdities, like a convinced man. Hamlet, shaken with terror and despair, bristles with buffooneries. Heine mocks his own emotions, even whilst he displays them. These men love travesties, put a solemn garb over comic ideas, a clown's jacket over grave ones. Another feature of humour is that the author forgets the public for whom he writes. He declares that he does not care for it, that he needs neither to be understood nor approved, that he thinks and amuses himself by himself, and that if his taste and ideas displease it it has only to disappear. He wishes to be refined and original at his ease; he is at home in his book, and with closed doors, he gets into his slippers, dressing-gown, often with his feet in the air, sometimes without a shirt. Carlyle has a style of his own, and marks his idea in his own fashion; it is our business to understand it. He alludes to a saying of Goethe, of Shakspeare, an anecdote which strikes him at the moment; so much the worse for us if we do not know it. He shouts when the fancy takes him; the worse for us if our ears do not like it. He writes on the caprice of his imagination, with all the starts of invention; the worse for us if our mind goes at a different pace. He catches on the wing all the shades, all the oddities of his conception; the worse for us if ours cannot reach them. A last feature of humour is the irruption of violent joviality, buried under a heap of sadnesses. Absurd indecency appears unannounced. Physical nature, hidden and oppressed under habits of melancholic reflection, is laid bare for an instant. You see a grimace, a clown's gesture, then everything resumes its wonted gravity. Add lastly the unforeseen flashes of imagination. The humorist covers a poet; suddenly, in the monotonous mist of prose, at the end of an argument, a vista shines: beautiful or ugly, it matters

not; it is enough that it strikes our eyes. These inequalities fairly paint the solitary, energetic, imaginative German, a lover of violent contrasts, confirmed in personal and gloomy reflection, with sudden up-wellings of physical instinct, so different from the Latin and classical races, races of orators or artists, where they never write but with an eye to the public, where they relish only consequent ideas, are only happy in the spectacle of harmonious forms, where the fancy is regulated, and voluptuousness appears natural. Carlyle is profoundly German, nearer to the primitive stock than any of his contemporaries, strange and unexampled in his fancies and his pleasantries; he calls himself 'a bemired aurochs or uras of the German woods, . . . the poor wood-ox so bemired in the forests.'[1] For instance, his first book, *Sartor Resartus*, which is a clothes-philosophy, contains, *à propos* of aprons and breeches, a metaphysics, a politics, a psychology. Man, according to him, is a dressed animal. Society has clothes for its foundation. 'How, without Clothes, could we possess the master-organ, soul's seat, and true pineal gland of the Body Social: I mean, a PURSE:'[2]

'To the eye of vulgar Logic, says he, 'what is man? An omnivorous Biped that wears Breeches. To the eye of Pure Reason what is he? A Soul, a Spirit, and divine Apparition. Round his mysterious ME, there lies, under all those woolrags, a Garment of Flesh (or of Senses), contextured in the Loom of Heaven; whereby he is revealed to his like, and dwells with them in UNION and DIVISION; and sees and fashions for himself a Universe, with azure Starry Spaces, and long Thousands of Years. Deep-hidden is he under that strange Garment; amid Sounds and Colours and Forms, as it were, swathed-in, and inextricably over-shrouded: yet it is skywoven, and worthy of a God.'[3]

The paradox continues, at once irregular and mystical, hiding theories under follies, mixing together fierce ironies, tender pastorals, love-stories, explosions of rage, and carnival pictures. He says well:

'Perhaps the most remarkable incident in Modern History is not the Diet of Worms, still less the Battle of Austerlitz, Wagram, Waterloo, Peterloo, or any other Battle; but an incident passed carelessly over by most Historians, and treated with some degree of ridicule by others: namely, George Fox's making to himself a suit of Leather.'[4]

For, thus clothed for the rest of his life, lodging in a tree and eating wild berries, man could remain at peace and invent Puritanism, that is, conscience-worship, at his leisure. This is how Carlyle treats the ideas which are dearest to him. He jests in connection with the doctrine, which was to employ his life and occupy his whole soul.

Would you like an abstract of his politics, and his opinion about his country? He proves that in the modern transformation of religions two principal sects have risen, especially in England; the one of 'Poor Slaves,' the other of Dandies. Of the first he says:

[1] *Life of Sterling.*
[2] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. x.; *Pure Reason.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. i.; *Incident in Modern History.*

'Something Monastic there appears to be in their Constitution: we find them bound by the two Monastic Vows, of Poverty and Obedience; which Vows, especially the former, it is said, they observe with great strictness; nay, as I have understood it, they are pledged, and be it by any solemn Nazarene ordination or not, irrevocably consecrated thereto, even *before* birth. That the third Monastic Vow, of Chastity, is rigidly enforced among them, I find no ground to conjecture.

'Furthermore, they appear to imitate the Dandiacal Sect in their grand principle of wearing a peculiar Costume. . . . Their raiment consists of innumerable skirts, lappets, and irregular wings, of all cloths and of all colours; through the labyrinthic intricacies of which their bodies are introduced by some unknown process. It is fastened together by a multiplex combination of buttons, thrums, and skewers; to which frequently is added a girdle of leather, of hempen or even of straw rope, round the loins. To straw rope, indeed, they seem partial, and often wear it by way of sandals. . . .

'One might fancy them worshippers of Hertha, or the Earth: for they dig and affectionately work continually in her bosom; or else, shut up in private Oratories, meditate and manipulate the substances derived from her; seldom looking-up towards the Heavenly Luminaries, and then with comparative indifference. Like the Druids, on the other hand, they live in dark dwellings; often even breaking their glass-windows, where they find such, and stuffing them up with pieces of raiment, or other opaque substances, till the fit obscurity is restored. . . .

'In respect of diet they have also their observances. All Poor Slaves are Rhizophagous (or Root-eaters); a few are Ichthyophagous, and use Salted Herrings: other animal food they abstain from; except indeed, with perhaps some strange inverted fragment of a Brahminical feeling, such animals as die a natural death. Their universal sustenance is the root named Potato, cooked by fire alone. . . . In all their Religious Solemnities, Potheen is said to be an indispensable requisite, and largely consumed.'[1]

Of the other sect he says:

'A certain touch of Manicheism, not indeed in the Gnostic shape, is discernible enough: also (for human Error walks in a cycle, and reappears at intervals) a not-inconsiderable resemblance to that Superstition of the Athos Monks, who by fasting from all nourishment, and looking intensely for a length of time into their own navels, came to discern therein the true Apocalypse of Nature, and Heaven Unveiled. To my own surmise, it appears as if this Dandiacal Sect were but a new modification, adapted to the new time, of that primeval Superstition, *Self-worship*. . . .

'They affect great purity and separatism; distinguish themselves by a particular costume (whereof some notices were given in the earlier part of this Volume); likewise, so far as possible, by a particular speech (apparently some broken *Lingua-franca*, or English-French); and, on the whole, strive to maintain a true Nazarene deportment, and keep themselves unspotted from the world.'

'They have their Temples, whereof the chief, as the Jewish Temple did, stands in their metropolis; and is named *Almack's*, a word of uncertain etymology. They worship principally by night; and have their Highpriests and Highpriestesses, who, however, do not continue for life. The rites, by some supposed to be of the Menadic sort, or perhaps with an Eleusinian or Cabiric character, are held strictly secret. Nor are Sacred Books wanting to the Sect; these they call *Fashionable Novels*: however, the Canon is not completed, and some are canonical and others not.'[2] . . .

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. x.; *The Dandiacal Body*. [2] *Ibid.*

Their chief articles of faith are:

'1. Coats should have nothing of the triangle about them; at the same time, wrinkles behind should be carefully avoided.

'2. The collar is a very important point: it should be low behind, and slightly rolled.

'3. No licence of fashion can allow a man of delicate taste to adopt the posterial luxuriance of a Hottentot.

'4. There is safety in a swallow-tail.

'5. The good sense of a gentleman is nowhere more finely developed than in his rings.

'6. It is permitted to mankind, under certain restrictions, to wear white waistcoats.

'7. The trousers must be exceedingly tight across the hips.

'All which Propositions I, for the present, content myself with modestly but peremptorily and irrevocably denying.'[1]

This premised, he draws conclusions:

'I might call them two boundless and indeed unexampled Electric Machines (turned by the "Machinery of Society"), with batteries of opposite quality; Drudgism the Negative, Dandyism the Positive: one attracts hourly towards it and appropriates all the Positive Electricity of the nation (namely, the Money thereof); the other is equally busy with the Negative (that is to say the Hunger), which is equally potent. Hitherto you see only partial transient sparkles and sputters: but wait a little, till the entire nation is in an electric state; till your whole vital Electricity, no longer healthfully Neutral, is cut into two isolated portions of Positive and Negative (of Money and of Hunger); and stands there bottled-up in two World-Batteries! The stirring of a child's finger brings the two together; and then—What then? The Earth is but shivered into impalpable smoke by that Doom's-thunderpeal: the Sun misses one of his Planets in Space, and thenceforth there are no eclipses of the Moon. Or better still, I might liken—'[2]

He stops suddenly, and leaves you to your conjectures. This bitter pleasantry is that of a furious or despairing man, who designedly, and simply by reason of his passion, would restrain it and force himself to laugh; but whom a sudden shudder at the end reveals just as he is. In one place Carlyle says that there is, at the bottom of the English character, under all its habits of calculation and coolness, an inextinguishable furnace:

'Deep hidden it lies, far down in the centre, like genial central fire, with stratum after stratum of arrangement, traditionary method, composed productiveness, all built above it, vivified and rendered fertile by it: justice, clearness, silence, perseverance unhasting, unresting diligence, hatred of disorder, hatred of injustice, which is the worst disorder, characterise this people: the inward fire we say, as all such fires would be, is hidden in the centre. Deep hidden, but awakenable, but immeasurable; let no man awaken it.'

It is a fire of extraordinary fierceness, as the rage of devoted Berserkirs, who, once rushing to the heat of the battle, felt no more their wounds, and

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. x.; *The Dandiacal Body.* [2] *Ibid.*

lived, fought, and killed, pierced with strokes, the least of which would have been mortal to an ordinary man. It is this destructive phrenzy, this rousing of inward unknown powers, this loosening of a ferocity, enthusiasm, and imagination disordered and not to be bridled, which appeared in these men at the Renaissance and the Reformation, and a remnant of which still endures in Carlyle. Here is a vestige of it, in a passage almost worthy of Swift, which is the abstract of his customary emotions, and at the same time his conclusion on the age in which we live:

'Supposing swine (I mean four-footed swine), of sensibility and superior logical parts, had attained such culture; and could, after survey and reflection, jot down for us their notion of the Universe, and of their interests and duties there,— might it not well interest a discerning public, perhaps in unexpected ways, and give a stimulus to the languishing book-trade? The votes of all creatures, it is understood at present, ought to be had; that you may "legislate" for them with better insight. "How can you govern a thing," say many, "without first asking its vote?" Unless, indeed, you already chance to know its vote,—and even something more, namely, what you are to think of its vote: what *it* wants by its vote; and, still more important, what Nature wants,—which latter, at the end of the account, the only thing that will be got!— —Pig Propositions, in a rough form, are somewhat as follows:

'1. The Universe, so far as sane conjecture can go, is an immeasurable Swine's-trough, consisting of solid and liquid, and of other contrasts and kinds;—especially consisting of attainable and unattainable, the latter in immensely greater quantities for most pigs.

'2. Moral evil is unattainability of Pig's-wash; moral good, attainability of ditto.

'3. "What is Paradise, or the State of Innocence?" Paradise, called also State of Innocence, Age of Gold, and other names, *was* (according to Pigs of weak judgment) unlimited attainability of Pig's-wash; perfect fulfilment of one's wishes, so that the Pig's imagination could not outrun reality; a fable and an impossibility, as Pigs of sense now see.

'4. "Define the Whole Duty of Pigs." It is the mission of universal Pighood, and the duty of all Pigs, at all times, to diminish the quantity of unattainable and increase that of attainable. All knowledge and device and effort ought to be directed thither and thither only: Pig science, Pig enthusiasm and Devotion have this one aim. It is the Whole Duty of Pigs.

'5. Pig Poetry ought to consist of universal recognition of the excellence of Pig's-wash and ground barley, and the felicity of Pigs whose trough is in order, and who have had enough: Hrumph!

'6. The Pig knows the weather; he ought to look out what kind of weather it will be.

'7. "Who made the Pig?" Unknown;—perhaps the Pork-butcher.

'8. "Have you Law and Justice in Pigdom?" Pigs of observation have discerned that there is, or was once supposed to be, a thing called justice. Undeniably at least there is a sentiment in Pig-nature called indignation, revenge, etc., which, if one Pig provoke another, comes out in a more or less destructive manner: hence laws are necessary, amazing quantities of laws. For quarrelling is attended with loss of blood, of life, at any rate with frightful effusion of the general stock of Hog's-wash, and ruin (temporary ruin) to large sections of the

universal Swine's trough: wherefore let justice be observed, that so quarrelling be avoided.

'9. "What is justice?" Your own share of the general Swine's-trough, not any portion of my share.

'10. "But what is 'my' share?" Ah! there, in fact, lies the grand difficulty; upon which Pig science, meditating this long while, can settle absolutely nothing. My share—hrumph!—my share is, on the whole, whatever I can contrive to get without being hanged or sent to the hulks.'[1]

Such is the mire in which he plunges modern life, and, beyond all others, English life; drowning with the same stroke, and in the same filth, the positive mind, the love of comfort, industrial science, Church, State, philosophy, and law. This cynical catechism, thrown in amidst furious declamations, gives, I think, the dominant note of this strange mind: it is this mad tension which constitutes his talent; which produces and explains his images and incongruities, his laughter and his rages. There is an English expression which cannot be translated into French, but which depicts this condition, and illustrates the whole physical constitution of the race: *His blood is up.* In fact, the cold and phlegmatic temperament covers the surface; but when the roused blood has swept through the veins, the fevered animal can only be glutted by devastation, and only be satiated by excess.

III.

It seems as though a soul so violent, so enthusiastic, so savage, so abandoned to imaginative follies, so void of taste, order, and measure, would be capable only of rambling, and expending itself in hallucinations, full of gloom and danger. In fact, many of those who have had this temperament, and who were his genuine forefathers—the Norse pirates, the poets of the sixteenth century, the Puritans of the seventeenth—were madmen, pernicious to others and themselves, bent on devastating things and ideas, destroying the public security and their own heart. Two entirely English barriers have restrained and directed Carlyle: the sentiment of actuality, which is the positive spirit, and of the sublime, which makes the religious spirit; the first has turned him to real things, the other has furnished him with the interpretation of real things: instead of being sickly and visionary, he has become a philosopher and a historian.

IV.

We must read his history of Cromwell to understand how far this sentiment of actuality penetrates him; with what knowledge it endows him; how he rectifies dates and texts; how he verifies traditions and genealogies; how he visits places, examines the trees, looks at the brooks, knows the agriculture, prices, the whole domestic and rural economy, all the political and literary circumstances; with what minute-

[1] *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, 1850; *Jesuitism*, 28.

ness, precision, and vehemence he reconstructs before his eyes and before our own the external picture of objects and affairs, the internal picture of ideas and emotions. And it is not simply on his part conscience, habit, or prudence, but need and passion. In this great obscure void of the past, his eyes fix upon the rare luminous points as on a treasure. The black sea of oblivion has swallowed up the rest: the million thoughts and actions of so many million beings have disappeared, and no power will make them rise again to the light. These few points subsist alone, like the tops of the highest rocks of a submerged continent. With what ardour, what deep feeling for the destroyed worlds, of which these rocks are the remains, does the historian lay upon them his eager hands, to discover from their nature and structure some revelation of the great drowned regions, which no eye shall ever see again! A number, a trifling detail about expense, a petty phrase of barbarous Latin, is priceless in the sight of Carlyle. I should like you to read the commentary with which he surrounds the chronicle of the monk Jocelin of Brakelond,[1] to show you the impression which a proved fact produces on such a soul; all the attention and emotion that an old barbarous word, a kitchen list, summons up:

'Behold therefore, this England of the Year 1200 was no chimerical vacuity or dreamland, peopled with mere vaporous Fantasms, Rymer's Fœdera, and Doctrines of the Constitution; but a green solid place, that grew corn and several other things. The sun shone on it; the vicissitude of seasons and human fortunes. Cloth was woven and worn; ditches were dug, furrow-fields ploughed, and houses built. Day by day all men and cattle rose to labour, and night by night returned home weary to their several lairs. . . . The *Dominus Rex*, at departing, gave us "thirteen *sterlingii*," one shilling and one penny, to say a mass for him. . . . For king Lackland *was* there, verily he. . . . There, we say, is the grand peculiarity; the immeasurable one; distinguishing, to a really infinite degree, the poorest historical Fact from all Fiction whatsoever. "Fiction," "Imagination," "Imaginative poetry," &c. &c., except as the vehicle for truth, or is fact of some sort . . . what is it?[2] . . . And yet these grim old walls are not a dilettantism and dubiety; they are an earnest fact. It was a most real and serious purpose they were built for! Yes, another world it was, when these black ruins, white in their new mortar and fresh chiselling, first saw the sun as walls, long ago. . . . Their architecture, belfries, land-carucates? Yes,—and that is but a small item of the matter. Does it never give thee pause, this other strange item of it, that men then had a *soul*,—not by hearsay alone, and as a figure of speech; but as a truth that they *knew*, and practically went upon!'[3]

And then he tries to resuscitate this soul before our eyes; for this is his special feature, the special feature of every historian who has the sentiment of actuality, to understand that parchments, walls, dress, bodies themselves, are only cloaks and documents; that the true fact is the inner feeling of men who have lived, that the only important

[1] In *Past and Present*, bk. ii. [2] *Ibid.* bk. ii. ch. i.; *Jocelin of Brakelond.*
[3] *Ibid.* ch. ii.; *St. Edmondsbury.*

fact is the state and structure of their soul, that the first and unique business is to reach that inner feeling, that all diverges from it. We must tell ourselves this fact over and over again: history is but the history of the heart; we have to search out the feelings of past generations, and nothing else. This is what Carlyle perceives; man is before him, risen from the dead; he penetrates within him, sees that he feels, suffers, and wills, in that special and individual manner, now absolutely lost and extinguished, in which he did feel, suffer, and will. And he looks upon this sight, not coldly, like a man who only half sees things in a gray mist, indistinctly and uncertain, but with all the force of his heart and sympathy, like a convinced spectator, for whom past things, once proved, are as present and visible as the corporeal objects which his hand handles and touches, at the very moment. He feels this fact so clearly, that he bases upon it all his philosophy and history. In his opinion, great men, kings, writers, prophets, and poets are only great in this sense:

'It is the property of the hero, in every time, in every place, in every situation, that he comes back to reality; that he stands upon things, and not shows of things.'[1]

The great man discovers some unknown or neglected fact, proclaims it; men hear him, follow him; and this is the whole of history. And not only does he discover and proclaim it, but he believes and sees it. He believes it, not as hearsay or conjecture, like a truth simply probable and handed down; he sees it personally, face to face, with absolute and indomitable faith; he deserts opinion for conviction, tradition for intuition. Carlyle is so steeped in his process, that he applies it to all great men. And he is not wrong, for there is none more potent. Wherever he penetrates with this lamp, he carries a light not known before. He pierces mountains of paper erudition, and enters into the hearts of men. Everywhere he goes beyond political and conventional history. He divines characters, comprehends the spirit of extinguished ages, feels better than an Englishman, better than Macaulay himself, the great revolutions of the soul. He is almost German in his force of imagination, his antiquarian perspicacity, his broad general views, and yet he is no dealer in guesses. The national common sense and the energetic craving for profound belief retain him on the limits of supposition; when he does guess, he gives it for what it is worth. He has no taste for hazardous history. He rejects hearsay and legends; he accepts only partially, and under reserve, the Germanic etymologies and hypotheses. He wishes to draw from history a positive and active law for himself and us. He expels and tears away from it, all the doubtful and agreeable additions which scientific curiosity and romantic imagination accumulate. He puts aside this parasitic growth to seize the useful and solid wood. And when he has seized it, he drags it so energetically before us, in order

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, 1868.

to make us touch it, he handles it in so violent a manner, he places it under such a glaring light, he illuminates it by such coarse contrasts of extraordinary images, that we are infected, and in spite of ourselves reach the intensity of his belief and vision.

He goes beyond, or rather is carried beyond this. The facts seized upon by this vehement imagination, are melted in it as in a fire. Beneath this fury of conception, all vacillates. Ideas, changed into hallucinations, lose their solidity, beings are like dreams; the world, appearing in a nightmare, seems no more than a nightmare; the attestation of the bodily senses loses its weight before inner visions as lucid as itself. Man finds no more difference between his dreams and his perceptions. Mysticism enters like a smoke within the overheated walls of a collapsing imagination. It was thus that it once penetrated into the ecstasies of ascetic Hindoos, and into the philosophy of our first two centuries. Throughout, the same state of the imagination has produced the same doctrine. The Puritans, Carlyle's true ancestors, were all inclined to it. Shakspeare reached it by the prodigious tension of his poetic dreams, and Carlyle ceaselessly repeats after him that 'we are such stuff as dreams are made of.' This real world, these events so harshly followed up, circumscribed, and handled, are to him only apparitions; the universe is divine. 'Thy daily life is girt with wonder, and based on wonder; thy very blankets and breeches are miracles. . . . The unspeakable divine significance, full of splendour, and wonder, and terror, lies in the being of every man and of every thing; the presence of God who made every man and thing.'

'Atheistic science babbles poorly of it, with scientific nomenclatures, experiments, and what-not, as if it were a poor dead thing, to be bottled up in Leyden jars, and sold over counters: but the natural sense of man, in all times, if he will honestly apply his sense, proclaims it to be a living thing.—ah, an unspeakable, godlike thing; towards which the best attitude for us, after never so much science, is awe, devout prostration and humility of soul; worship if not in words, then in silence.'[1]

In fact, this is the ordinary position of Carlyle. It ends in wonder. Beyond and beneath objects, he perceives as it were an abyss, and is interrupted by shudderings. A score of times, a hundred times in the *History of the French Revolution*, we have him suspending his account, and dreaming. The immensity of the black night in which the human apparitions rise for an instant, the fatality of the crime which, once committed, remains attached to the chain of events as by a link of iron, the mysterious conduct which impels these floating masses to an unknown but inevitable end, are the great and sinister images which haunt him. He dreams anxiously of this focus of existence, of which we are only the reflection. He walks fearfully amongst this people of shadows, and tells himself, that he too is a shadow. He is troubled by the thought

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity*.

that these human phantoms have their substance elsewhere, and will answer to eternity for their short passage. He cries and trembles at the idea of this motionless world, of which ours is but the mutable figure. He divines in it something august and terrible. For he shapes it, and he shapes our world according to his own mind; he defines it by the emotions which he draws from it, and figures it by the impressions which he receives from it. A moving chaos of splendid visions, of infinite perspectives, stirs and boils within him at the least event which he touches; ideas abound, violent, mutually jostling, driven from all sides of the horizon amidst darkness and the flashes of lightning: his thought is a tempest, and he attributes to the universe the magnificence, the obscurities, and the terrors of a tempest. Such a conception is the true source of religious and moral sentiment. The man who is penetrated by them passes his life, like a Puritan, in veneration and fear. Carlyle passes his in expressing and impressing veneration and fear, and all his books are preachings.

V.

Here truly is a strange mind, and one which makes us reflect. Nothing is more calculated to manifest truths than these eccentric beings. It will not be time misspent to discover the true position of this mind, and to explain for what reasons, and in what measure, he must fail to possess, or must attain to, beauty and truth.

As soon as we wish to begin to think, we have before us a whole and distinct object—that is, an assemblage of details connected amongst themselves, and separated from their surroundings. Whatever the object, tree, animal, sentiment, event, it is always the same; it always has parts, and these parts always form a whole: this group, more or less vast, comprises others, and is comprised in others, so that the smallest portion of the universe is, like the entire universe, a group. Thus the whole employment of human thought is to reproduce groups. According as a mind is fit for this or not, it is capable or incapable. According as it can reproduce great or small groups, it is great or small. According as it can produce complete groups, or only certain of their parts, it is complete or partial.

What is it, then, to reproduce a group? It is first to separate therefrom all the parts, then to arrange them in ranks according to their resemblances, then to form these ranks into families, lastly to combine the whole under some general and dominant mark; in short, to imitate the hierarchical classifications of science. But the task is not ended there: this hierarchy is not an artificial and external arrangement, but a natural and internal necessity. Things are not dead, but living; there is in them a force which produces and organises this group, which binds together the details and the whole, which repeats the type in all its parts. It is this force which the mind must reproduce in itself, with all its effects; it must perceive it by rebound and sympathy: this force

must engender in the mind the entire group, and must be developed within it as without it: the series of internal ideas must imitate the series of external; the emotion must follow the conception, vision must complete analysis; the mind must become, like nature, creative. Then only can we say, We know.

All minds take one or other of these routes, and are divided by them into two great classes, corresponding to opposite temperaments. In the first are the plain men of science, the popularisers, orators, writers—in general, the classical ages and the Latin races; in the second are the poets, prophets, commonly the inventors—in general, the romantic ages and the Germanic races. The first proceed gradually from one idea to the next: they are methodical and cautious; they speak for the world at large, and prove what they say; they divide the field which they would traverse into sections to begin with, in order to exhaust their subject; they march by straight and level roads, so as to be sure against a fall; they proceed by transitions, enumerations, summaries; they advance from general to still more general conclusions; they form the exact and complete classification of a group. When they go beyond simple analysis, their whole talent consists in eloquently pleading a thesis. Amongst the contemporaries of Carlyle, Macaulay is the most complete model of this species of mind. The others, after having violently and confusedly rummaged amongst the details of a group, plunge with a sudden spring into the mother-notion. They see it then in its entirety; they perceive the powers which organise it; they reproduce it by divination; they depict it in miniature by the most expressive words, the strangest ideas; they are not capable of decomposing it into regular series, they always perceive in a lump. They think only by sudden concentrations of vehement ideas. They have a vision of distant effects or living actions; they are revealers or poets. Michelet, amongst the French, is the best example of this form of intellect, and Carlyle is an English Michelet.

He knows it, and argues plausibly that genius is an intuition, an insight:

'Our Professor's method is not, in any case, that of common school Logic, where the truths all stand in a row, each holding by the skirts of the other; but at best that of practical Reason, proceeding by large Intuition over whole systematic groups and kingdoms; whereby, we might say, a noble complexity, almost like that of Nature, reigns in his Philosophy, or spiritual Picture of Nature: a mighty maze, yet, as faith whispers, not without a plan.'[1]

Doubtless, but disadvantages nevertheless are not wanting; and, in the first place, obscurity and barbarism. In order to understand him, we must study laboriously, or else have precisely the same kind of mind as he. But few men are critics by profession, or natural seers; in general, an author writes to be understood, and it is annoying to end in enigmas.

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. viii.; *The World out of Clothes.*

On the other hand, this visionary process is hazardous: when we wish to leap immediately into the familiar and generative idea, we run the risk of falling short; the gradual progress is slower, but more sure. The methodical people, so much ridiculed by Carlyle, have at least the advantage over him in being able to verify all their steps. Moreover, these vehement divinations and assertions are very often void of proof. Carlyle leaves the reader to search for them: the reader at times does not search for them, and refuses to believe the soothsayer on his word. Consider, again, that affectation infallibly enters into this style. It must assuredly be inevitable, since Shakspeare is full of it. The simple writer, prosaic and rational, can always reason and stick to his prose; his inspiration has no gaps, and demands no efforts. On the contrary, prophecy is a violent condition which does not sustain itself. When it fails, it is replaced by grand gesticulation. Carlyle warms himself up in order to continue glowing. He struggles hard; and this forced perpetual epilepsy is a most shocking spectacle. We cannot endure a man who wanders, repeats himself, returns to oddities and exaggerations already worn bare, makes a jargon of them, declaims, exclaims, and makes it a point, like a wretched bombastic comedian, to upset our nerves. Finally, when this species of mind coincides in a lofty mind with the habits of a gloomy preacher, it results in objectionable manners. Many will find Carlyle presumptuous, coarse; they will suspect from his theories, and also from his way of speaking, that he looks upon himself as a great man, neglected, of the race of heroes; that, in his opinion, the human race ought to put themselves in his hands, and trust him with their business. Certainly he lectures us, and with contempt. He despises his epoch; he has a sulky, sour tone; he keeps purposely on stilts. He disdains objections. In his eyes, opponents are not up to his form. He bullies his predecessors: when he speaks of Cromwell's biographers, he takes the tone of a man of genius astray amongst pedants. He has the superior smile, the resigned condescension of a hero who feels himself a martyr, and he only quits it, to shout at the top of his voice, like an ill-taught plebeian.

All this is redeemed, and more, by rare advantages. He speaks truly: minds like his are the most fertile. They are almost the only ones which make discoveries. Pure classifiers do not invent; they are too dry. 'To know a thing, what we can call knowing, a man must first *love* the thing, sympathise with it.' 'Fantasy is the organ of the Godlike, the understanding is indeed thy window; too clear thou canst not make it; but fantasy is thy eye, with its colour-giving retina, healthy or diseased.' In more simple language, this means that every object, animate or inanimate, is gifted with powers which constitute its nature and produce its development; that, in order to know it, we must recreate it in ourselves, with the train of its potentialities, and that we only know it entirely by inwardly perceiving all its tendencies, and inwardly *seeing* all its effects. And verily this process,

which is the imitation of nature, is the only one by which we can penetrate nature; Shakspeare had it as an instinct, and Goethe as a method. There is none so powerful or delicate, so fitted to the complexity of things and to the structure of our mind. There is none more proper to renew our ideas, to withdraw us from formulas, to deliver us from the prejudices with which education involves us, to overthrow the barriers in which our surroundings enclose us. It is by this that Carlyle escaped from conventional English ideas, penetrated into the philosophy and science of Germany, to think out again in his own manner the Germanic discoveries, and to give an original theory of man and of the universe.

§ 2.—Vocation.

It is from Germany that Carlyle has drawn his greateat ideas. He studied there, he knows perfectly its literature and language, he sets this literature in the highest rank, he translated *Wilhelm Meister*, he wrote upon the German writers a long series of critical articles, he has just written a life of Frederick the Great. He has been the most recognised and most original of the interpreters who have introduced the German mind into England. This is no mean work, for it is in a like work that every thinking person is now labouring.

I.

From 1780 to 1830 Germany has produced all the ideas of our historic age; and for half a century still, perhaps for a whole century, our great work will be to think them out again. The thoughts which have been born and have blossomed in a country, never fail to propagate themselves in the neighbouring countries, and to be engrafted there for a season. That which is happening to us has happened twenty times already in the world; the growth of the mind has always been the same, and we may, with some assurance, foresee for the future what we observe in the past. At certain times appears an original form of mind, which produces a philosophy, a literature, an art, a science, and which, having renewed human thought, slowly and infallibly renews all human thoughts. All minds which seek and find are in the current; they only progress through it: if they oppose it, they are checked; if they deviate, they are slackened; if they assist it, they are carried beyond the rest. And the movement goes on so long as there remains anything to be discovered. When art has given all its works, philosophy all its theories, science all its discoveries, it stops; another form of mind takes the sway, or man ceases to think. Thus at the Renaissance appeared the artistic and poetic genius, which, born in Italy and carried into Spain, was there extinguished after a century and a half, in universal extinction, and which, with other characteristics, transplanted into France and England, ended after a hundred

years in the refinements of mannerists and the follies of sectarians, having produced the Reformation, confirmed free thought, and founded science. Thus with Dryden and Malherbe was born the oratorical and classical spirit, which, having produced the literature of the seventeenth century and the philosophy of the eighteenth, dried up under the successors of Voltaire and Pope, and died after two hundred years, having polished Europe and raised the French Revolution. Thus at the end of the last century arose the philosophic German genius, which, having engendered a new metaphysics, theology, poetry, literature, linguistic science, an exegesis, erudition, descends now into the sciences, and continues its evolution. No more original spirit, more universal, more fertile in consequences of every scope and species, more capable of transforming and reforming everything, has appeared for three hundred years. It is of the same order as that of the Renaissance and of the Classical Age. It, like them, connects itself with the great works of contemporary intelligence, appears in all civilised lands, is propagated with the same inward qualities, but under different forms. It, like them, is one of the epochs of the world's history. It is encountered in the same civilisation and in the same races. We may then conjecture without too much rashness, that it will have a like duration and destiny. We thus succeed in fixing with some precision our place in the endless stream of events and things. We know that we are almost in the midst of one of the partial currents which compose it. We can detach the form of mind which directs it, and seek beforehand the ideas to which it conducts us.

II.

Wherein consists this form? In the power of discovering general ideas. No nation and no age has possessed it in so high a degree as the Germans. This is their governing faculty; it is by this power that they have produced all they have done. This gift is properly that of comprehension (*begreifen*). By it we find the aggregate conceptions (*Begriffe*); we reduce under one ruling idea all the scattered parts of a subject; we perceive under the divisions of a group the common bond which unites them; we conciliate objections; we bring down apparent contrasts to a profound unity. It is the pre-eminent philosophical faculty; and, in fact, it is the philosophical faculty which has impressed its seal on all their works. By it, they have vivified dry studies, which seemed only fit to occupy pedants of the academy or seminary. By it, they have divined the involuntary and primitive logic which has created and organised languages, the great ideas which are hidden at the bottom of every work of art, the dull poetic emotions and vague metaphysical intuitions which have engendered religions and myths. By it, they have perceived the spirit of ages, civilisations, and races, and transformed into a system of laws the history which was but a heap of facts. By it, they have rediscovered or renewed the

sense of dogmas, connected God with the world, man with nature, spirit with matter, perceived the successive chain and the original necessity of the forms, whereof the aggregate is the universe. By it, they have created a science of linguistics, a mythology, a criticism, an æsthetics, an exegesis, a history, a theology and metaphysics, so new that they continued long incomprehensible, and could only be expressed by a separate language. And this bent was so dominant, that it subjected to its empire arts and poetry themselves. The poets by it have become erudite, philosophical; they have constructed their dramas, epics, and odes after prearranged theories, and in order to manifest general ideas. They have rendered moral theses, historical periods, sensible; they have created and applied æsthetics; they had no artlessness, or made their artlessness an instrument of reflection; they have not loved their characters for themselves; they have ended by transforming them into symbols; their philosophical ideas have broken every instant out of the poetic shape, in which they tried to enclose them; they have been all critics,[1] bent on constructing or reconstructing, possessing erudition and method, attracted to imagination by art and study, incapable of producing living beings unless by science and artifice, really systematical, who, to express their abstract conceptions, have employed, in place of formulas, the actions of personages and the music of verse.

III.

From this aptitude to conceive the aggregate, one sole idea could be produced—the idea of aggregates. In fact, all the ideas worked out for fifty years in Germany are reduced to one only, that of development (*Entwickelung*), which consists in representing all the parts of a group as jointly responsible and complemental, so that each necessitates the rest, and that, all combined, they manifest, by their succession and their contrasts, the inner quality which assembles and produces them. A score of systems, a hundred dreams, a hundred thousand metaphors, have variously figured or disfigured this fundamental idea. Despoiled of its trappings, it merely affirms the mutual dependence which unites the terms of a series, and attaches them all to some abstract property within them. If we apply it to Nature, we come to consider the world as a scale of forms, and, as it were, a succession of conditions, having in themselves the reason for their succession and for their existence, containing in their nature the necessity for their decay and their limitation, composing by their union an indivisible whole, which, sufficing for itself, exhausting all possibilities, and connecting all things, from time and space to existence and thought, resemble by its harmony and its magnificence some omnipotent and immortal god. If we apply it to man, we come to consider sentiments and thoughts as natural and

[1] Goethe, the greatest of them all.

necessary products, linked amongst themselves like the transformations of an animal or plant; which leads us to conceive religions, philosophies, literatures, all human conceptions and emotions, as necessary series of a state of mind which carries them away on its passage, which, if it returns, brings them back, and which, if we can reproduce it, gives us indirectly the means of reproducing them at will. These are the two doctrines which run through the writings of the two chief thinkers of the century, Hegel and Goethe. They have used them throughout as a method, Hegel to grasp the formula of everything, Goethe to obtain the vision of everything; they have steeped themselves therein so thoroughly, that they have drawn thence their inner and habitual sentiments, their morality and their conduct. We may consider them to be the two philosophical legacies which modern Germany has left to the human race.

IV.

But these legacies have not been unmixed, and this passion for aggregate views has marred its proper work by its excess. It is rarely that our mind can grasp aggregates: we are imprisoned in too narrow a corner of time and space; our senses perceive only the surface of things; our instruments have but a small scope; we have only been experimentalising for three centuries; our memory is short, and the documents by which we dive into the past are only doubtful lights, scattered over an immense region, which they show by glimpses without illuminating them. To bind together the small fragments which we are able to attain, we have generally to guess the causes, or to employ general ideas so vast, that they might suit all facts; we must have recourse either to hypothesis or abstraction, invent arbitrary explanations, or be lost in vague ones. These, in fact, are the two vices which have corrupted German thought. Conjecture and formula have abounded. Systems have multiplied, some above the others, and broken out into an inextricable growth, into which no stranger dare enter, having found that every morning brought a new budding, and that the definitive discovery proclaimed over-night was about to be choked by another infallible discovery, capable at most of lasting till the morning after. The public of Europe was astonished to see so much imagination and so little common sense, pretensions so ambitious and theories so hollow, such an invasion of chimerical existences and such an overflow of useless abstractions, so strange a lack of discernment and so great a luxuriance of irrationality. The fact was, that folly and genius flowed from the same source; a like faculty, excessive and all-powerful, produced discoveries and errors. If to-day we behold the workshop of human ideas, overcharged as it is and encumbered by its works, we may compare it to some blast-furnace, a monstrous machine which day and night has flamed unwearingly, half darkened by choking vapours, and in which the raw ore, piled heaps on heaps, has descended bubbling in

glowing streams into the channels in which it has become hard. No other furnace could have melted the shapeless mass, crusted over with the primitive scoriæ; this obstinate elaboration and this intense heat were necessary to overcome it. Now the sluggish tappings burden the earth; their weight discourages the hands which touch them; if we would turn them to some use, they defy us or break: as they are, they are of no use; and yet as they are, they are the material for every tool, and the instrument of every work; it is our business to cast them over again. Every mind must carry them back to the forge, purify them, temper them, recast them, and extract the pure metal from the rough mass.

V.

But every mind will re-forge them according to its own inner warmth; for every nation has its original genius, in which it moulds the ideas elsewhere derived. Thus Spain, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, renewed in a different spirit the Italian painting and poetry. Thus the Puritans and Jansenists thought out in new times the primitive Protestantism; thus the French of the eighteenth century widened and put forth the liberal ideas, which the English had applied or proposed in religion and politics. It is so in the present day. The French cannot at once reach, like the Germans, lofty aggregate conceptions. They can only march step by step, starting from concrete ideas, rising gradually to abstract ideas, after the progressive methods and gradual analysis of Condillac and Descartes. But this slower route leads almost as far as the other; and in addition, it avoids many wrong steps. It is by this route that we succeed in correcting and comprehending the views of Hegel and Goethe; and if we look around us, at the ideas which are gaining ground, we find that we are already arriving thither. Positivism, based on all modern experience, and freed since the death of its founder from his social and religious fancies, has assumed a new life, by reducing itself to noting the connection of natural groups and the chain of established sciences. On the other hand, history, romance, and criticism, sharpened by the refinements of Parisian culture, have clearly brought forward the laws of human events; nature has been shown to be an order of facts, man a continuation of nature; and we have seen a superior mind, the most delicate, the most lofty of our own time, resuming and modifying the German divinations, expounding in the French manner everything which the science of myths, religions, and languages had stored up, beyond the Rhine, during the last sixty years.[1]

VI.

The growth in England is more difficult; for the aptitude for general ideas is less, and the mistrust of general ideas is greater: they

[1] M. Renan.

reject at once all that remotely or nearly seems capable of injuring practical morality or established dogma. The positive spirit seems as if it must exclude all German ideas; and yet it is the positive spirit which introduces them. Thus theologians,[1] having desired to represent to themselves with entire clearness and certitude the characters of the New Testament, have suppressed the halo and mist in which distance enveloped them; they have figured them with their garments, gestures, accent, all the shades of emotion which their style has marked, with the species of imagination which their age has imposed, amidst the scenery which they have looked upon, amongst the relics before which they have spoken, with all the circumstances, physical or moral, which learning and travel can render sensible, with all the comparisons which modern physiology and psychology could suggest; they have given us their precise and demonstrated, coloured and graphic idea; they have seen these personages, not through ideas and as myths, but face to face and as men. They have applied Macaulay's art to exegesis; and if German erudition could pass unmutilated through this crucible, its solidity, as well as its value, would be doubled.

But there is another wholly Germanic route by which German ideas may become English. This is the road which Carlyle has taken; by this, religion and poetry in the two countries are correspondent; by it the two nations are sisters. The sentiment of internal things (insight) is in the race, and this sentiment is a sort of philosophical divination. At need, the heart takes the place of the brain. The inspired, impassioned man penetrates into things; perceives the cause by the shock which he feels from it; he embraces aggregates by the lucidity and velocity of his creative imagination; he discovers the unity of a group by the unity of the emotion which he receives from it. For, as soon as you create, you feel within yourself the force which acts in the objects of your thought; your sympathy reveals to you their sense and connection; intuition is a finished and living analysis; poets and prophets, Shakspeare and Dante, St. Paul and Luther, have been systematic theorists, without wishing it, and their visions comprise general conceptions of man and the universe. Carlyle's mysticism is a power of the same kind. He translates into a poetic and religious style German philosophy. He speaks, like Fichte, of the divine idea of the world, the reality which lies at the bottom of every apparition. He speaks, like Goethe, of the spirit which eternally weaves the living robe of Divinity. He borrows their metaphors, only he takes them literally. He considers the god, which they consider as a form or a law, as a mysterious and sublime being. He conceives by exaltation, by painful reverie, by a confused sentiment of the interweaving of existences, that unity of nature which they arrive at by dint of reasonings and abstractions. Here is a last route, steep doubtless, and little frequented, for reaching the summits

[1] In particular, Stanley and Jowett.

from which German thought at first issued forth. Methodical analysis added to the co-ordination of the positive sciences; French criticism refined by literary taste and worldly observation; English criticism supported by practical common sense and positive intuition; lastly, in a niche apart, sympathetic and poetic imagination: these are the four routes by which the human mind is now proceeding to reconquer the sublime heights to which it believed itself carried, and which it has lost. These routes all conduct to the same summit, but by four different distances. That by which Carlyle has advanced, being the lengthiest, has led him to the strangest perspective. I will let him speak for himself; he will tell the reader what he has seen.

§ 3.—Philosophy, Morality, and Criticism.

'However it may be with Metaphysics, and other abstract Science originating in the Head (*Verstand*) alone, no Life-Philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*), such as this of Clothes pretends to be, which originates equally in the Character (*Gemüth*), and equally speaks thereto, can attain its significance till the Character itself is known and seen.'[1]

Carlyle has related, under the name of Teufelsdroeckh, all the succession of emotions which lead to this Life-Philosophy. They are those of a modern Puritan; the same doubts, despairs, internal conflicts, exaltations, and lacerations, by which the old Puritans arrived at faith: it is their faith under other forms. With him, as with them, the spiritual and inner man is distinguished from the exterior and carnal; extricates duty from the solicitations of pleasure; discovers God through the appearances of nature; and, beyond the world and the instincts of sense, perceives a supernatural world and instinct.

I.

The specialty of Carlyle, as of every mystic, is to see a double meaning in everything. For him texts and objects are capable of two interpretations: the one gross, open to all, serviceable for ordinary life; the other sublime, open to a few, serviceable to a higher life. Carlyle says:

'To the eye of vulgar Logic, what is man? An omnivorous Biped that wears Breeches. To the eye of Pure Reason what is he? A Soul, a Spirit, and divine Apparition. Round his mysterious ME, there lies, under all those wool-rags, a Garment of Flesh (or of Senses), contextured in the Loom of Heaven. . . . Deep-hidden is he under that strange Garment; amid Sounds and Colours and Forms, as it were, swathed-in, and inextricably over-shrouded: yet it is skywoven, and worthy of a God.'[2]

'For Matter, were it never so despicable, is Spirit, the manifestation of Spirit: were it never so honourable, can it be more? The thing Visible, nay, the thing Imagined, the thing in any way conceived as Visible, what is it but a Garment, a Clothing of the higher, celestial, Invisible, "unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright?"'[3]

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[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. xi.; *Prospective.*
[2] *Ibid.* bk. i. ch. x.; *Pure Reason.*
[3] *Ibid.*

'All visible things are emblems; what thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken, is not there at all: Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea, and *body* it forth.'[1]

Language, poetry, arts, church, state, are only symbols:

'In the Symbol proper, what we can call a Symbol, there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there. By Symbols, accordingly, is man guided and commanded, made happy, made wretched. He everywhere finds himself encompassed with Symbols, recognised as such or not recognised: the Universe is but one vast Symbol of God; nay, if thou wilt have it, what is man himself but a Symbol of God; is not all that he does symbolical; a revelation to Sense of the mystic god-given force that is in him?'[2]

Let us rise higher still, and regard Time and Space, those two abysses which it seems nothing could fill up or destroy, and over which hover our life and our universe. 'They are but forms of our thought. . . . There is neither Time nor Space; they are but two grand fundamental, world-enveloping appearances, SPACE and TIME. These, as spun and woven for us from before Birth itself, to clothe our celestial ME for dwelling here, and yet to blind it,—lie all-embracing, as the universal canvas, or warp and woof, whereby all minor illusions, in this Phantasm Existence, weave and paint themselves.'[3] Our root is in eternity; we seem to be born and to die, but actually, *we are*.

'Know of a truth that only the Time-shadows have perished, or are perishable; that the real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, *is* even now and for ever. . . . Are we not Spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility?'[4] 'O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh.

'And again, do we not squeak and gibber (in our discordant, screech-owlish debatings and recriminatings); and glide bodeful, and feeble, and fearful; or uproar (*poltern*), and revel in our mad Dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day?'[5]

What is there, then, beneath all these vain appearances? What is this motionless existence, whereof nature is but the 'changing and living robe?' None knows; if the heart divines it, the mind perceives it not. 'Creation,' says one, 'lies before us like a glorious rainbow; but the sun that made it lies behind us, hidden from us.' We have

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[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. xi.; *Prospective*.
[2] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. iii.; *Symbols*.
[3] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism*.
[4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid.*

only the sentiment thereof, not the idea We feel that this universe is beautiful and terrible, but its essence will remain ever unnamed. We have only to fall on our knees before this veiled face; wonder and adoration are our true attitude:

'The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mécanique Céleste* and *Hegel's Philosophy*, and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories, with their results, in his single head,—is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye. Let those who have Eyes look through him, then he may be useful.

'Thou wilt have no Mystery and Mysticism; wilt walk through thy world by the sunshine of what thou callest Truth, or even by the hand-lamp of what I call Attorney-Logic: and "explain" all, "account" for all, or believe nothing of it. Nay, thou wilt attempt laughter; whoso recognises the unfathomable, all-pervading domain of Mystery, which is everywhere under our feet and among our hands; to whom the Universe is an Oracle and Temple, as well as a Kitchen and Cattle-stall,—he shall be a delirious Mystic; to him thou, with sniffing charity, wilt protrusively proffer thy Hand-lamp, and shriek, as one injured, when he kicks his foot through it.'[1]

'We speak of the Volume of Nature; and truly a Volume it is,—whose Author and Writer is God. To read it! Dost thou, does man, so much as well know the Alphabet thereof? With its Words, Sentences, and grand descriptive Pages, poetical and philosophical, spread out through Solar Systems, and Thousands of Years, we shall not try thee. It is a Volume written in celestial hieroglyphs, in the true Sacred-writing; of which even Prophets are happy that they can read here a line and there a line. As for your Institutes, and Academies of Science, they strive bravely; and from amid the thick-crowded, inextricably intertwisted hieroglyphic writing, pick out, by dextrous combination, some Letters in the vulgar Character, and therefrom put together this and the other economic Recipe, of high avail in Practice.'[2]

Do you believe, perhaps,

'That Nature is more than some boundless Volume of such Recipes, or huge, well-nigh inexhaustible Domestic-Cookery Book, of which the whole secret will in this manner one day evolve itself?'[3] . . .

'And what is that Science, which the scientific head alone, were it screwed off, and (like the Doctor's in the Arabian tale) set in a basin, to keep it alive, could prosecute without shadow of a heart, but one other of the mechanical and menial handicrafts, for which the Scientific Head (having a Soul in it) is too noble an organ? I mean that Thought without Reverence is barren, perhaps poisonous.'[4]

Let the scales drop from your eyes, and look:

'Then sawest thou that this fair Universe, were it in the meanest province thereof, is in very deed the star-domed City of God; that through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams.'[5]

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[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. i. ch. x.; *Pure Reason.*
[2] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism.*
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.* bk. i. ch. x.; *Pure Reason.*
[5] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism.*

'Generation after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the mill of Industry; one, hunter-like, climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to Sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth, then plunge again into the Inane. . . . But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.'[1]

II.

This vehement religious poetry, charged as it is with memories of Milton and Shakspeare, is but an English transcription of German ideas. There is a fixed rule for transposing,—that is, for converting into one another the ideas of a positivist, a pantheist, a spiritualist, a mystic, a poet, a head given to images, and a head given to formulas. We may mark all the steps which lead simple philosophical conception to its extreme and violent state. Take the world as science shows it; it is a regular group, or, if you will, a series which has a law; according to science, it is nothing more. As from the law we deduce the series, you may say that the law engenders it, and consider this law as a force. If you are an artist, you will seize in the aggregate the force, the series of effects, and the fine regular manner in which the force produces the series. To my mind, this sympathetic representation is of all the most exact and complete: knowledge is limited, as long as it does not arrive at this, and it is complete when it has arrived there. But beyond, there commence the phantoms which the mind creates, and by which it dupes itself. If you have a little imagination, you will make of this force a distinct existence, situated beyond the reach of experience, spiritual, the principle and the substance of concrete things. That is a metaphysical existence. Add one degree to your imagination and enthusiasm, and you will say that this spirit, situated beyond time and space, is manifested through these, that it subsists and animates everything, that we have in it motion, existence, and life. Push to the limits of vision and ecstasy, and you will declare that this principle is the only reality, that the rest is but appearance: thenceforth you are deprived of all the means of defining it; you can affirm nothing of it, but that it is the source of things, and that nothing can be affirmed of it; you will consider it as a grand unfathomable abyss; you seek, in order to come at it, a path other than that of clear ideas; you recognise sentiment, exaltation. If you have a gloomy

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. iii. ch. viii.; *Natural Supernaturalism*.

temperament, you seek it, like the sectarians, gloomily, amongst prostrations and agonies. By this scale of transformations, the general idea becomes a poetic, then a philosophical, then a mystical existence; and German metaphysics, concentrated and heated, is changed into English Puritanism.

III.

What distinguishes this mysticism from others is its practicability. The Puritan is troubled not only about what he ought to believe, but about what he ought to do; he craves an answer to his doubts, but especially a rule for his conduct; he is tormented by the notion of his ignorance, but also by the horror of his vices; he seeks God, but duty also. In his eyes the two are but one; moral sense is the promoter and guide of philosophy:

'Is there no God, then; but at best an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of his Universe, and *seeing* it go? Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no divine Messenger and Guide, but a false earthly Fantasm, made-up of Desire and Fear, of emanations from the gallows and from Dr. Graham's Celestial-Bed? Happiness of an approving Conscience! Did not Paul of Tarsus, whom admiring men have since named Saint, feel that *he* was the "chief of sinners;" and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit (*wohlgemuth*), spend much of his time in fiddling? Foolish Word-monger and Motive-grinder, who in thy Logic-mill hast an earthly mechanism for the Godlike itself, and wouldst fain grind me out Virtue from the husks of pleasure,—I tell thee, Nay!'[1]

There is an instinct within us which says Nay. We discover within us something higher than love of happiness,—the love of sacrifice. That is the divine part of our soul. We perceive in it and by it the God, who otherwise would continue ever unknown. By it we penetrate an unknown and sublime world. There is an extraordinary state of the soul, by which it leaves selfishness, renounces pleasure, cares no more for itself, adores pain, comprehends holiness:

'Only this I know, If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. With Stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much. But what, in these dull, unimaginative days, are the terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things *he* has provided for his Elect!'[2]

This obscure beyond, which the senses cannot reach, the reason cannot define, which the imagination figures as a king and a person; this is holiness, this is the sublime. 'The hero is he who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine, Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial; his being is in that. . . . His life is a piece of the everlasting heart of nature itself.'[3] Virtue is a revelation, heroism is a light, conscience a philosophy; and we shall

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. ii. ch. vii.; *The Everlasting No.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Lectures on Heroes.*

express in the abstract this moral mysticism, by saying that God, for Carlyle, is a mystery, whose only name is The Ideal.

IV.

This faculty for perceiving the inner sense of things, and this disposition to search out the moral sense of things, have produced in him all his doctrines, and first his Christianity. This Christianity is very free: Carlyle takes religion in the German manner, after a symbolical fashion. This is why he is called a Pantheist, which in plain language means a madman or a rogue. In England, too, he is exorcised. His friend Sterling sent him long dissertations to bring him back to a personal God. Every moment he wounds to the quick the theologians, who make the prime cause into an architect or an administrator. He shocks them still more when he touches upon dogma; he considers Christianity as a myth, of which the essence is the Worship of Sorrow:

'Knowest thou that "*Worship of sorrow?*" The Temple thereof, founded some eighteen centuries ago, now lies in ruins, overgrown with jungle, the habitation of doleful creatures: nevertheless, venture forward; in a low crypt, arched out of falling fragments, thou findest the Altar still there, and its sacred Lamp perennially burning.'[1]

But its guardians know it no more. A frippery of conventional adornments hides it from the eyes of men. The Protestant Church in the nineteenth century, like the Catholic Church in the sixteenth, needs a reformation. We want a new Luther:

'For if Government is, so to speak, the outward SKIN of the Body Politic, holding the whole together and protecting it; and if all your Craft-Guilds and Associations for Industry, of hand or of head, are the Fleshly Clothes, the muscular and osseous Tissues (lying *under* such SKIN), whereby Society stands and works; —then is Religion the inmost Pericardial and Nervous Tissue which ministers Life and warm Circulation to the whole . . .

'Meanwhile, in our era of the World, those same Church Clothes have gone sorrowfully out-at-elbows: nay, far worse, many of them have become mere hollow Shapes, or Masks, under which no living Figure or Spirit any longer dwells; but only spiders and unclean beetles, in horrid accumulation, drive their trade; and the mask still glares on you with its glass-eyes, in ghastly affectation of Life, —some generation and half after Religion has quite withdrawn from it, and in unnoticed nooks is weaving for herself new Vestures, wherewith to reappear and bless us, or our sons or grandsons.'[2]

Christianity once reduced to the sentiment of abnegation, other religions resume, in consequence, dignity and importance. They are, like Christianity, forms of universal religion. 'They have all had a truth in them, or men would not have taken them up.'[3] They are no quack's

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, bk. ii. ch. ix.; *The Everlasting Yea.*
[2] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. ii.; *Church Clothes.*
[3] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*

imposture or poet's dream. They are an existence more or less troubled by the mystery, august and infinite, which is at the bottom of the universe:

'Canopus shining down over the desert, with its blue diamond brightness (that wild blue spirit-like brightness, far brighter than we ever witness here), would pierce into the heart of the wild Ishmaelitish man, whom it was guiding through the solitary waste there. To his wild heart, with all feelings in it, with no *speech* for any feeling, it might seem a little eye, that Canopus, glancing-out on him from the great deep Eternity; revealing the inner Splendour to him.'[1]

'Grand Lamaism,' Popery itself, interpret after their fashion the sentiment of the divine; therefore Popery itself is to be respected. 'While a *pious* life remains capable of being led by it, . . . let it last as long as it can.'[2] What matters if they call it idolatry?

'Idol is *Eidolon*, a thing seen, a symbol. It is not God, but a symbol of God. . . . Is not all worship whatsoever a worship by Symbols, by *eidola*, or things seen? . . . The most rigorous Puritan has his Confession of Faith, and intellectual Representation of Divine things, and worships thereby. . . . All creeds, liturgies, religious forms, conceptions that fitly invest religious feelings, are in this sense *eidola*, things seen. All worship whatsoever must proceed by Symbols, by Idols:—we may say, all Idolatry is comparative, and the worst Idolatry is only *more* idolatrous.'[3]

The only detestable idolatry is that from which the sentiment has departed, which consists only in learned ceremonies, in mechanical repetition of prayers, in decent profession of formulas not understood. The deep veneration of a monk of the twelfth century, prostrated before the relics of St. Edmund, was worth more than the conventional piety and cold philosophical religion of a Protestant of to-day. Whatever the worship, it is the sentiment which gives it its whole value. And this sentiment is that of morality:

'The one end, essence, and use of all religion past, present, and to come, was this only: To keep that same Moral Conscience or Inner Light of ours alive and shining. . . . All religion was here to remind us, better or worse, of what we already know better or worse, of the quite *infinite* difference there is between a Good man and a Bad; to bid us love infinitely the one, abhor and avoid infinitely the other,—strive infinitely to *be* the one, and not to be the other. "All religion issues in due Practical Hero-worship."'[4]

'All true Work is religion; and whatsoever religion is not Work may go and dwell among the Brahmins, Antinomians, Spinning Dervishes, or where it will; with me it shall have no harbour.'[5]

With you it may not; but it has elsewhere. We touch here the English and narrow feature of this German and broad conception. There are many religions which are not moral; there are more still which are not practical. Carlyle would reduce the heart of man to the English

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[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*
[2] *Ibid.* iv.; *The Hero as Priest.* [3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Past and Present*, bk. iii. ch. xv.; *Morrison Again.*
[5] *Ibid.* bk. iii. ch. xii.: *Reward.*

sentiment of duty, and his imagination to the English sentiment of respect. The half of human poetry escapes his grasp. For if a part of ourselves raises us to abnegation and virtue, another part leads us to enjoyment and pleasure. Man is pagan as well as Christian; nature has two faces: several races, India, Greece, Italy, have only comprehended the first, and have had for religions merely the adoration of overflowing force and the ecstasy of a grand imagination; or, again, the admiration of harmonious form, with the culture of pleasure, beauty, and happiness.

V.

His criticism of literary works is of the same character and violence, and has the same scope and the same limits, the same principle and the same conclusions, as his criticism of religious works. Carlyle has introduced the great ideas of Hegel and Goethe, and has confined them under the narrow discipline of Puritan sentiment.[1] He considers the poet, the writer, the artist, as an interpreter of 'the Divine Idea of the World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance;' as a revealer of the infinite, as representing his century, his nation, his age: we recognise here all the German formulas. They signify that the artist detects and expresses better than any one, the salient and durable features of the world which surrounds him, so that we might draw from his work a theory of man and of nature, together with a picture of his race and of his time. This discovery has renewed criticism. Carlyle owes to it his finest views, his lessons on Shakspeare and Dante, his studies on Goethe, Johnson, Burns, and Rousseau. Thus, by a natural process, he becomes the herald of German literature; he makes himself the apostle of Goethe; he has praised him with a neophyte's fervour, to the extent of lacking on this subject skill and perspicacity; he calls him a Hero, presents his life as an example to all the men of our century; he will not see his paganism, manifest as it is, and so repellent to a Puritan. Through the same causes, he has made of Jean-Paul, the affected clown, the extravagant humorist, 'a giant,' a sort of prophet; he has heaped eulogy on Novalis and the mystics; he has set the democrat Burns above Byron; he has exalted Johnson, that honest pedant, the most grotesque of literary behemoths. His principle is, that in a work of the mind, form is little, the basis is alone important. As soon as a man has a profound sentiment, a strong conviction, his book is beautiful. A writing, be it what it will, only manifests the soul: if this soul is serious, if it is intimately and habitually shaken by the grave thoughts which ought to preoccupy a soul; if it loves what is good, is devoted, endeavours with its whole effort, without a lingering thought of self-interest or self-love, to publish the truth which strikes it, it has reached its goal. We have nothing to do with the talent; we do not need to be pleased by beautiful forms;

[1] *Lectures on Heroes; Miscellanies, passim.*

our sole object is to find ourselves face to face with the sublime; the whole destiny of man is to perceive heroism; poetry and art have no other employment or merit. You see how far and with what excess Carlyle possesses the Germanic sentiment, why he loves the mystics, humorists, prophets, illiterate writers, and men of action, spontaneous poets, all who violate regular beauty through ignorance, brutality, folly, or deliberately. He goes so far as to excuse the rhetoric of Johnson, because Johnson was loyal and sincere; he does not distinguish in him the literary man from the practical: he ceases to see the classic declaimer, a strange compound of Scaliger, Boileau, and La Harpe, majestically decked out in the Ciceronian gown, to see only the religious man of convictions. Such a habit shuts the eyes to one half of things. Carlyle speaks with scornful indifference [1] of modern dilettantism, seems to despise painters, admits no sensible beauty. Wholly on the side of the writers, he neglects the artists; for the source of arts is the sentiment of form; and the greatest artists, the Italians, the Greeks, did not know, like their priests and poets, any beauty beyond that of voluptuousness and force. Thence also it comes that he has no taste for French literature. The exact order, the fine proportions, the perpetual regard for the agreeable and proper, the harmonious structure of clear and consecutive ideas, the delicate picture of society, the perfection of style,—nothing which moves us, has attraction for him. His mode of comprehending life is too far removed from ours. In vain he tries to understand Voltaire; all he can do is to slander him:

'We find no heroism of character in him, from first to last; nay, there is not, that we know of, one great thought in all his six-and-thirty quartos. . . . He sees but a little way into Nature; the mighty All, in its beauty and infinite mysterious grandeur, humbling the small *me* into nothingness, has never even for moments been revealed to him; only this and that other atom of it, and the differences and discrepancies of these two, has he looked into and noted down. His theory of the world, his picture of man and man's life is little; for a poet and philosopher, even pitiful. "The Divine idea, that which lies at the bottom of appearance," was never more invisible to any man. He reads history not with the eyes of a devout seer, or even of a critic, but through a pair of mere anticatholic spectacles. It is not a mighty drama enacted on the theatre of Infinitude, with suns for lamps and Eternity as a background, . . . but a poor wearisome debating-club dispute, spun through ten centuries, between the *Encyclopédie* and the *Sorbonne*. . . . God's Universe is a larger patrimony of St. Peter, from which it were well and pleasant to hunt out the Pope. . . . The still higher praise of having had a right or noble aim cannot be conceded him without many limitations, and may, plausibly enough, be altogether denied. . . . The force necessary for him was nowise a great and noble one; but small, in some respects a mean one, to be nimbly and seasonably put into use. The Ephesian temple, which it had employed many wise heads and strong arms for a lifetime to build, could be *un*built by one madman, in a single hour.'[2]

These are big words; we will not employ the like. I will simply

[1] *Life of Sterling.* [2] *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays,* 4 vols.; ii. *Voltaire.*

say, that if a man were to judge Carlyle, as a Frenchman, as he judges Voltaire as an Englishman, he would draw a different picture of Carlyle from that which I am trying here to draw.

VI.

This trade of calumny was in vogue fifty years ago; in fifty more it will probably have altogether ceased. The French are beginning to comprehend the gravity of the Puritans; perhaps the English will end by comprehending the gaiety of Voltaire: the first are labouring to appreciate Shakspeare; the second will doubtless attempt to appreciate Racine. Goethe, the master of all modern minds, knew well how to appreciate both.[1] The critic must add to his natural and national soul five or six artificial and acquired souls, and his flexible sympathy must introduce him to extinct or foreign sentiments. The best fruit of criticism is to detach ourselves from ourselves, to constrain us to make allowance for the surroundings in which we live, to teach us to distinguish objects themselves from the transient appearances, with which our character and our age never fail to clothe them. Each one regards them through glasses of diverse focus and hue, and no one can reach the truth save by taking into account the form and tint which the composition of his glasses imposes on the objects which he sees. Hitherto we have been wrangling and pummelling one another,—this man declaring that things are green, another that they are yellow; others, again, that they are red; each accusing his neighbour of seeing wrong, and being disingenuous. Now, at last, we are learning moral optics; we are finding that the colour is not in the objects, but in ourselves; we pardon our neighbours for seeing differently from us; we recognise that they may see red what to us appears blue, green what to us appears yellow; we can even define the kind of glasses which produces yellow, and the kind which produces green, divine their effects from their nature, predict the tint under which the object we are about to present to them will appear, construct beforehand the system of every mind, and perhaps one day free ourselves from every system. 'As a poet,' said Goethe, 'I am a polytheist; as a naturalist, a pantheist; as a moral man, a deist; and in order to express my mind, I need all these forms.' In fact, all these glasses are serviceable, for they all show us some new aspect of things. The important point is to have not one, but several, to employ each at the suitable moment, not to take into account the particular colour of these glasses, but to know that behind these million moving poetical tints, optics affirm only law-abiding transformations.

§ 4.—Conception of History.

I.

'Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here. They were the

[1] See this double praise in *Wilhelm Meister*.

leaders of men, these great ones; the modellers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realisation and embodiment of Thoughts that dwelt in the Great Men sent into the world: the soul of the whole world's history, it may justly be considered, were the history of these.'[1]

Whatever they be, poets, reformers, writers, men of action, revealers, he gives them all a mystical character:

'Such a man is what we call an *original* man; he comes to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us. . . . Direct from the Inner Fact of things;—he lives, and has to live, in daily communion with that. Hearsays cannot hide it from him; he is blind, homeless, miserable, following hearsays; *it* glares-in upon him. . . . It is from the heart of the world that he comes; he is portion of the primal reality of things.'[2]

In vain the ignorance of his age and his own imperfections mar the purity of his original vision; he ever attains some immutable and life-giving truth; for this truth he is listened to, and by this truth he is powerful. That which he has discovered is immortal and efficacious:

'The works of a man, bury them under what guano-mountains and obscene owl-droppings you will, do not perish, cannot perish. What of Heroism, what of Eternal Light was in a Man and his Life, is with very great exactness added to the Eternities; remains forever a new divine portion of the Sum of Things.'[3]

'No nobler feeling than this of admiration for one higher than himself dwells in the breast of man. It is to this hour, and at all hours, the vivifying influence in man's life. Religion I find stand upon it. . . . What therefore is loyalty proper, the life-breath of all society, but an effluence of Hero-worship, submissive admiration for the truly great? Society is founded on Hero-worship.'[4]

This feeling is the very bottom of man. It exists even in this levelling and destructive age:

'I seem to see in this indestructibility of Hero-worship the everlasting adamant lower than which the confused wreck of revolutionary things cannot fall.'[5]

II.

We have here a German theory, but transformed, made precise, thickened after the English manner. The Germans said that every nation, period, civilisation, had its *idea;* that is its chief feature, from which the rest were derived; so that philosophy, religion, arts, and morals, all the elements of thought and action, could be deduced from some original and fundamental quality, from which all proceeded and in which all ended. Where Hegel proposed an idea, Carlyle proposes a heroic sentiment. It is more palpable and moral. To complete his escape from the vague, he considers this sentiment in a hero. He must

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*
[2] *Ibid.* ii.; *The Hero as Prophet.*
[3] *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, iii. part x.; *Death of the Protector.*
[4] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.* [5] *Ibid.*

give to abstractions a body and a soul; he is not at ease in pure conceptions, and wishes to touch a real being.

But this being, as he conceives it, is an abstract of the rest. For, according to him, the hero contains and represents the civilisation in which he is comprised; he has discovered, proclaimed or practised an original conception, and in this his age has followed him. The knowledge of a heroic sentiment thus gives us a knowledge of a whole age. By this method Carlyle has emerged beyond biography. He has rediscovered the grand views of his masters. He has felt, like them, that a civilisation, vast and dispersed as it is over time and space, forms an indivisible whole. He has combined in a system of hero-worship the scattered fragments which Hegel united by a law. He has derived from a common sentiment the events which the Germans derived from a common definition. He has comprehended the deep and distant connection of things, such as bind a great man to his time, such as connect the works of accomplished thought with the stutterings of infant thought, such as link the wise inventions of modern constitutions to the disorderly furies of primitive barbarism:

'Silent, with closed lips, as I fancy them, unconscious that they were specially brave; defying the wild ocean with its monsters, and all men and things;—progenitors of our own Blakes and Nelsons. . . . Hrolf or Rollo, Duke of Normandy, the wild Sea-king, has a share in governing England at this hour.'[1]

'No wild Saint Dominics and Thebaïd Eremites, there had been no melodious Dante; rough Practical Endeavour, Scandinavian and other, from Odin to Walter Raleigh, from Ulfila to Cranmer, enabled Shakspeare to speak. Nay, the finished Poet, I remark sometimes, is a symptom that his epoch itself has reached perfection and is finished; that before long there will be a new epoch, new Reformers needed.'[2]

His great poetic or practical works only publish or apply this dominant idea; the historian makes use of it, to rediscover the primitive sentiment which engenders them, and to form the aggregate conception which unites them.

III.

Hence a new fashion of writing history. Since the heroic sentiment is the cause of the other sentiments, it is to this the historian must devote himself. Since it is the source of civilisation, the mover of revolutions, the master and regenerator of human life, it is in this that he must observe civilisation, revolutions, and human life. Since it is the spring of every movement, it is by this that we shall understand every movement. Let the metaphysicians draw up deductions and formulas, or the politicians expound situations and constitutions. Man is not an inert being, moulded by a constitution, nor a lifeless being expressed by formula; he is an active and living soul, capable of acting, discovering, creating, devoting himself, and before all, of daring; genuine

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, i.; *The Hero as Divinity.*
[2] *Ibid.* iv.; *The Hero as Priest.*

history is an epic of heroism. This idea is, in my opinion, as it were, a brilliant light. For men have not done great things without great emotions. The first and sovereign motive of an extraordinary revolution is an extraordinary sentiment. Then we see appear and swell a lofty and all-powerful passion, which has burst the old dykes, and hurled the current of things into a new bed. All starts from this, and it is this which we must observe. Leave metaphysical formulas and political considerations, and regard the inner state of every mind; quit the bare narrative, forget abstract explanations, and study impassioned souls. A revolution is only the birth of a great sentiment. What is this sentiment, how is it bound to others, what is its degree, source, effect, how does it transform the imagination, understanding, common inclinations; what passions feed it, what proportion of folly and reason does it embrace—these are the main questions. If you wish to represent to me the history of Buddhism, you must show me the calm despair of the ascetics who, deadened by the contemplation of the infinite void, and by the expectation of final annihilation, attain in their monotonous quietude the sentiment of universal fraternity. If you wish to represent to me the history of Christianity, you must show me the soul of a Saint John or Saint Paul, the sudden renewal of the conscience, the faith in invisible things, the transformation of a soul penetrated by the presence of a paternal God, the irruption of tenderness, generosity, abnegation, trust, and hope, which rescued the wretches oppressed under the Roman tyranny and decline. To explain a revolution, is to write a partial psychology; the analysis of critics and the divination of artists are the only instruments which can attain to it: if we would have it precise and profound, we must ask it of those who, through their profession or their genius, possess a knowledge of the soul—Shakspeare, Saint-Simon, Balzac, Stendhal. This is why we may occasionally ask it of Carlyle. And there is a history which we may ask of him in preference to all others, that of the revolution which had conscience for its source, which set God in the councils of the state, which imposed strict duty, which provoked severe heroism. The best historian of Puritanism is a Puritan.

IV.

This history of Cromwell, Carlyle's masterpiece, is but a collection of letters and speeches, commented on and united by a continuous narrative. The impression which they leave is extraordinary. Grave constitutional histories hang heavy after this compilation. The author wished to make us comprehend a soul, the soul of Cromwell, the greatest of the Puritans, their chief, their abstract, their hero, and their model. His narrative resembles that of an eye-witness. A covenanter who should have collected letters, scraps of newspapers, and had daily added reflections, interpretations, notes, and anecdotes, might have written just such a book. At last we are face to face with Cromwell. We have his words,

we can hear his tone of voice; we seize, around any object, the circumstances which have produced it; we see him in his tent, in council, with the proper background, with his face and costume: every detail, the most minute, is here. And the sincerity is as great as the sympathy; the biographer confesses his ignorance, the lack of documents, the uncertainty; he is perfectly loyal, though a poet and a sectarian. With him we simultaneously restrain and push our conjectures; and we feel at every step, through our affirmations and our reservations, that we are firmly planting our feet upon the truth. Would that all history were like this, a selection of texts provided with a commentary! I would exchange for such a history all the regular arguments, all the beautiful colourless narrations, of Robertson and Hume. I can verify, whilst reading this, the judgment of the author; I no more think after him, but for myself; the historian does not obtrude himself between me and his subject. I see a fact, and not the account of a fact; the oratorical and personal envelope, with which the narrative covers the truth, disappears; I can touch the truth itself. And this Cromwell, with his Puritans, comes forth from the test, reformed and renewed. We divined pretty well already that he was not a mere man of ambition, a hypocrite, but we took him for a fanatic and hateful wrangler. We considered these Puritans as gloomy madmen, shallow brains, and full of scruples. Let us quit our French and modern ideas, and enter into these souls: we shall find there something else than hypochondria, namely, a grand sentiment—am I a just man? And if God, who is perfect justice, were to judge me at this moment, what sentence would he pass upon me?—Such is the original idea of the Puritans, and through them came the Revolution in England. The feeling of the difference there is between good and evil, had filled for them all time and space, and had become incarnate, and expressed for them, by such words as Heaven and Hell. They were struck by the idea of duty. They examined themselves by this light, without pity or shrinking; they conceived the sublime model of infallible and complete virtue; they were imbued therewith; they drowned in this absorbing thought all worldly prejudices and all inclinations of the senses; they conceived a horror even of imperceptible faults, which an honest man will excuse in himself; they exacted from themselves absolute and continuous perfection, and they entered into life with a fixed resolve to suffer and do all, rather than deviate one step. We laugh at a revolution about surplices and chasubles; there was a sentiment of the divine underneath all these disputes of vestments. These poor folk, shopkeepers and farmers, believed, with all their heart, in a sublime and terrible God, and the manner how to worship Him was not a trifling thing for them:

'Suppose now it were some matter of vital concernment, some transcendent matter (as Divine worship is), about which your whole soul, struck dumb with its excess of feeling, knew not how to *form* itself into utterance at all, and preferred formless silence to any utterance there possible,—what should we say of a man

coming forward to represent or utter it for you in the way of upholsterer-mummery? Such a man,—let him depart swiftly, if he love himself! You have lost your only son; are mute, struck down, without even tears: an importunate man importunately offers to celebrate Funeral Games for him in the manner of the Greeks!'[1]

This has caused the Revolution, and not the Writ of Shipmoney, or any other political vexation.

'You may take my purse, . . . but the Self is mine and God my Maker's.'[2]

And the same sentiment which made them rebels, made them conquerors. Men could not understand how discipline could survive in an army in which an inspired corporal would reproach a lukewarm general. They thought it strange that generals, who sought the Lord with tears, had learned administration and strategy in the Bible. They wondered that madmen could be men of business. The truth is, that they were not madmen, but men of business. The whole difference between them and practical men whom we know, is that they had a conscience; this conscience was their flame; mysticism and dreams were but the smoke. They sought the true, the just; and their long prayers, their nasal preachings, their Bible criticisms, their tears, their anguish, only mark the sincerity and ardour with which they applied themselves to the search. They read their duty in themselves; the Bible only aided them. At need they did violence to it, when they wished to verify by texts the suggestions of their own hearts. It was this sentiment of duty which united, inspired, and sustained them, which made their discipline, courage, and boldness; which raised to ancient heroism Hutchinson, Milton, and Cromwell; which instigated all decisive deeds, grand resolves, marvellous successes, the declaration of war, the trial of the king, the purge of Parliament, the humiliation of Europe, the protection of Protestantism, the sway of the seas. These men are the true heroes of England; they display, in high relief, the original characteristics and noblest features of England—practical piety, the rule of conscience, manly resolution, indomitable energy. They founded England, in spite of the corruption of the Stuarts and the relaxation of modern manners, by the exercise of duty, by the practice of justice, by obstinate toil, by vindication of right, by resistance to oppression, by the conquest of liberty, by the repression of vice. They founded Scotland, they founded the United States: at this day they are, by their descendants, founding Australia and colonising the world. Carlyle is so much their brother, that he excuses or admires their excesses—the execution of the king, the mutilation of Parliament, their intolerance, inquisition, the despotism of Cromwell, the theocracy of Knox. He sets them before us as models, and judges both past and present by them alone.

V.

Hence he saw nothing but evil in the French Revolution. He

[1] *Lectures on Heroes*, vi.; *The Hero as King*. [2] *Ibid.*

judges it as unjustly as he judges Voltaire, and for the same reasons. He understands our manner of acting no better than our manner of thinking. He looks for Puritan sentiment; and, as he does not find it, he condemns us. The idea of duty, the religious spirit, self-government, the authority of an austere conscience, can alone, in his opinion, reform a corrupt society; and none of all these are to be met with in French society. The philosophy which has produced and guided the Revolution was simply destructive, proclaiming no other gospel but, 'that a lie cannot be believed! Philosophy knows only this: Her other relief is mainly that in spiritual, supra-sensual matters, no belief is possible.' The theory of the *Rights of Man*, borrowed from Rousseau, is only a logical game, a pedantry almost as opportune as a 'Theory of Irregular Verbs.' The manners in vogue were the epicurism of Faublas. The morality in vogue was the promise of universal happiness. Incredulity, hollow rant, sensuality, were the mainsprings of this reformation. Men let loose their instincts and overturned the barriers. They replaced corrupt authority by unchecked anarchy. In what could a jacquerie of brutalised peasants, impelled by atheistical arguments, end?

'For ourselves, we answer that French Revolution means here the open violent Rebellion, and Victory, of disimprisoned Anarchy against corrupt, worn-out Authority.[1] . . .

'So thousandfold complex a Society ready to burst up from its infinite depths; and these men its rulers and healers, without life-rule for themselves—other life-rule than a Gospel according to Jean Jacques! To the wisest of them, what we must call the wisest, man is properly an accident under the sky. Man is without duty round him, except it be to make the Constitution. He is without Heaven above him, or Hell beneath him; he has no God in the world.

'While hollow languor and vacuity is the lot of the upper, and want and stagnation of the lower, and universal misery is very certain, what other thing is certain? . . . What will remain? The five unsatiated senses will remain, the sixth insatiable sense (of vanity); the whole *dæmoniac* nature of man will remain.

'Man is not what we call a happy animal; his appetite for sweet victual is too enormous. . . . (He cannot subsist) except by girding himself together for continual endeavour and endurance.'[2]

But set the good beside the evil; put down virtues beside vices! These sceptics believed in demonstrated truth, and would have her alone for mistress. These logicians founded society only on justice, and risked their lives rather than renounce an established theorem. These epicureans embraced in their sympathies entire humanity. These furious men, these workmen, these hungry, threadbare peasants, fought in the van for humanitarian interests and abstract principles. Generosity and enthusiasm abounded in France, as well as in England; acknowledge them under a form which is not English. These men were devoted to abstract truth, as the Puritan to divine truth; they followed philosophy, as the Puritans followed religion; they had for their aim universal sal-

[1] *The French Revolution*, i. bk. vi. ch. i.; *Make the Constitution.* [2] *Ibid.* i.

vation, as the Puritans had individual salvation. They fought against evil in society, as the Puritans fought it in the soul. They were generous, as the Puritans were virtuous. They had, like them, a heroism, but sympathetic, sociable, ready to proselytise, which reformed Europe, whilst the English one only served England.

VI.

This extravagant Puritanism, which revolted Carlyle against the French Revolution, revolts him against modern England:

'We have forgotten God;—in the most modern dialect and very truth of the matter, we have taken up the Fact of this Universe as it *is not*. We have quietly closed our eyes to the eternal Substance of things, and opened them only to the Shows and Shams of things. We quietly believe this Universe to be intrinsically a great unintelligible PERHAPS; extrinsically, clear enough, it is a great, most extensive Cattlefold and Workhouse, with most extensive Kitchen-ranges, Dining-tables,—whereat he is wise who can find a place! All the Truth of this Universe is uncertain; only the profit and loss of it, the pudding and praise of it, are and remain very visible to the practical man.

'There is no longer any God for us! God's Laws are become a Greatest-Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary Expedience; the Heavens overarch us only as an Astronomical Time-keeper; a butt for Herschel-telescopes to shoot science at, to shoot sentimentalities at:—in our and old Jonson's dialect, man has lost the *soul* out of him; and now, after the due period,—begins to find the want of it! This is verily the plague-spot; centre of the universal Social Gangrene, threatening all modern things with frightful death. To him that will consider it, here is the stem, with its roots and taproot, with its world-wide upas-boughs and accursed poison-exudations, under which the world lies writhing in atrophy and agony. You touch the focal-centre of all our disease, of our frightful nosology of diseases, when you lay your hand on this. There is no religion: there is no God: man has lost his soul, and vainly seeks antiseptic salt. Vainly: in killing Kings, in passing Reform bills, in French Revolutions, Manchester Insurrections, is found no remedy. The foul elephantine leprosy, alleviated for an hour, reappears in new force and desperateness next hour.'[1]

Since the return of the Stuarts, we are utilitarians or sceptics. We believe only in observation, statistics, gross and concrete truths; or else we doubt, half believe, on hearsay, with reserve. We have no moral convictions, and we have only floating convictions. We have lost the mainspring of action; we no longer set duty in the midst of our resolve, as the sole and undisturbed foundation of life; we are caught by all kinds of little experimental and positive receipts, and we amuse ourselves with all kinds of pretty pleasures, well chosen and arranged. We are egotists or dilettanti. We no longer look on life as an august temple, but as a machine for solid profits, or as a hall for refined amusements. We have our rich, our working-classes, our bankers, who preach the gospel of gold; we have gentlemen, dandies, lords, who preach the gospel of manners. We overwork ourselves to heap up guineas,

[1] *Past and Present*, bk. iii. ch. i.; *Phenomena*.

or else we make ourselves insipid to attain an elegant dignity. Our hell is no longer, as under Cromwell, the dread of being found guilty before the just Judge, but the dread of making a bad speculation, or of transgressing etiquette. We have for our aristocracy greedy shopkeepers, who reduce life to a calculation of profits and prices; and idle amateurs, whose great business is to preserve the game on their estates. We are no longer governed. Our government has no other ambition than to preserve the public peace, and to get in the taxes. Our constitution lays it down as a principle, that, in order to discover the true and the good, we have only to make two million imbeciles vote. Our Parliament is a great word-mill, where plotters out-bawl each other for the sake of making a noise.[1]

Under this thin cloak of conventionalities and phrases, ominously growls the irresistible democracy. England perishes if she ever ceases to be able to sell a yard of cotton at a farthing less than others. At the least check in the manufactures, 1,500,000 workmen,[2] without work, live upon public charity. The formidable masses, given up to the hazards of industry, urged by lust, impelled by hunger, oscillates between the fragile cracking barriers; we are nearing the final breaking-up, which will be open anarchy, and the democracy will heave amidst the ruins, until the sentiment of the divine and of duty has rallied them around the worship of heroism; until it has discovered the means of calling to power the most virtuous and the most capable;[3] until it has given its guidance into their hands, instead of making them subject to its caprices; until it has recognised and reverenced its Luther and its Cromwell, its priest and its king.

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[1] 'It is his effort and desire to teach this and the other thinking British man that said finale, the advent namely of actual open Anarchy, cannot be distant, now when virtual disguised Anarchy, long-continued, and waxing daily, has got to such a height; and that the one method of staving off the fatal consummation, and steering towards the Continents of the Future, lies not in the direction of reforming Parliament, but of what he calls reforming Downing Street; a thing infinitely urgent to be begun, and to be strenuously carried on. To find a Parliament more and more the express image of the People, could, unless the People chanced to be wise as well as miserable, give him no satisfaction. Not this at all; but to find some sort of *King*, made in the image of God, who could a little achieve for the People, if not their spoken wishes, yet their dumb wants, and what they would at last find to have been their instinctive *will*,—which is a far different matter usually, in this babbling world of ours.'—*Parliaments*, in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*.

'A king or leader, then, in all bodies of men, there must be; be their work what it may, there is one man here who by character, faculty, position, is fittest of all to do it.

'He who is to be my ruler, whose will is to be higher than my will, was chosen for me in Heaven. Neither, except in such obedience to the Heaven-chosen, is freedom so much as conceivable.'

[2] Official Report, 1842.

[3] *Latter-Day Pamphlets; Parliaments.*

VII.

Now-a-days, doubtless, in the whole civilised world, democracy is swelling or overflowing, and all the channels in which it flows, are fragile or temporary. But it is a strange offer to present for its issue the fanaticism and tyranny of the Puritans. The society and spirit which Carlyle proposes, as models for human nature, lasted but an hour, and could not last longer. The asceticism of the Republic produced the debauchery of the Restoration; the Harrisons brought the Rochesters, the Bunyans raised the Hobbes'; and the sectarians, in instituting the despotism of enthusiasm, established by reaction the authority of the positive mind and the worship of gross pleasure. Exaltation is not stable, and it cannot be exacted from man, without injustice and danger. The sympathetic generosity of the French Revolution ended in the cynicism of the Directory and the slaughters of the Empire. The chivalric and poetic piety of the great Spanish monarchy emptied Spain of men and of thoughts. The primacy of genius, taste, and intellect in Italy, reduced her at the end of a century to voluptuous sloth and political slavery. 'What makes the angel makes the beast;' and perfect heroism, like all excesses, ends in stupor. Human nature has its explosions, but with intervals: mysticism is serviceable but when it is short. Violent circumstances produce extreme conditions; great evils are necessary in order to raise great men, and you are obliged to look for shipwrecks when you wish to behold rescuers. If enthusiasm is beautiful, its results and its origins are sad; it is but a crisis, and a healthy state is better. In this respect Carlyle himself may serve for a proof. There is perhaps less genius in Macaulay than in Carlyle; but when we have fed for some time on this exaggerated and demoniac style, this marvellous and sickly philosophy, this contorted and prophetic history, these sinister and furious politics, we gladly return to the continuous eloquence, to the vigorous reasoning, to the moderate prognostications, to the demonstrated theories, of the generous and solid mind which Europe has just lost, who brought honour to England, and whose place none can fill.

CHAPTER V.

Philosophy.—Stuart Mill.

I. Philosophy in England—Organisation of positive science—Lack of general ideas.

II. Why metaphysics are wanting—Authority of Religion.

III. Indications and splendour of free thought—New exegesis—Stuart Mill—His works—His order of mind—To what school of philosophers he belongs—Value of higher speculation in human civilisation.

§ 1.—Exposition of Mill's Philosophy.

I. Object of logic—Wherein it is distinguished from psychology and metaphysics.

II. What is a judgment?—What do we know of the external and inner worlds?—The whole object of science is to add or connect facts.

III. The system based on this view of the nature of our knowledge.

IV. Theory of definitions—Its importance—Refutation of the old theory—There are no definitions of things, but of names only.

V. Theory of proof—Ordinary theory—Its refutation—What is the really fundamental part of a syllogism?

VI. Theory of axioms—Ordinary theory—Its refutation—Axioms are only truths of experience of a certain class.

VII. Theory of induction—The cause of a fact is only its invariable antecedent—Experience alone proves the stability of the laws of nature—What is a law?—By what methods are laws discovered?—The methods of agreement, of differences, of residues, of concomitant variations.

VIII. Examples and applications—Theory of dew.

IX. Deduction—Its province and method.

X. Comparison of the methods of induction and deduction—Ancient employment of the first—Modern use of the second—Sciences requiring the first—Sciences requiring the second—Positive character of Mill's work—His predecessors.

XI. Limits of our knowledge—It is not certain that all events happen according to laws—Chance in nature.

§ 2.—Discussion.

I. Agreement of this philosophy with the English mind—Alliance of the positive and religious spirits—By what faculty we arrive at the knowledge of causation.

II. There are no substances or forces, but only facts and laws—Abstraction—Its nature—Its part in science.

III. Theory of definitions—They explain the abstract generating elements of things.

IV. Theory of proof—The basis of proof in syllogism is an abstract law.

V. Theory of axioms—Axioms are relations between abstract truths—They may be reduced to the axiom of identity.

VI. Theory of induction—Its methods are of elimination or abstraction.

VII. The two great operations of the mind, experience and abstraction—The two great manifestations of things, sensible facts and abstract laws—Why we ought to pass from the first to the second—Meaning and extent of the axiom of causation.

VIII. It is possible to arrive at the knowledge of first elements—Error of German metaphysicians—They have neglected the element of chance, and of local perturbations—What might be known by a philosophising ant — Idea and limits of metaphysics—Its state in the three thinking nations—A morning in Oxford.[1]

I.

WHEN at Oxford some years ago, during the meeting of the British Association, I met, amongst the few students still in residence, a young Englishman, a man of intelligence, with whom I became intimate. He took me in the evening to the New Museum, well filled with

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[1] M. Taine has published this 'Study on Mill' separately, and preceded it by the following note, as a preface:—'When this Study first appeared, Mr. Mill did me the honour to write to me that it would not be possible to give in a few pages a more exact and complete notion of the contents of his work, considered as a body of philosophical teaching. "But," he added, "I think you are wrong in regarding the views I adopt as especially English. They were so in the first half of the eighteenth century, from the time of Locke to that of the reaction against Hume. This reaction, beginning in Scotland, assumed long ago the German form, and ended by prevailing universally. When I wrote my book, I stood almost alone in my opinions; and though they have met with a degree of sympathy which I by no means expected, we may still count in England twenty *à priori* and spiritualist philosophers for every partisan of the doctrine of Experience."

'This remark is very true. I myself could have made it, having been brought up in the doctrines of Scotch philosophy and the writings of Reid. I simply answer, that there are philosophers whom we do not count, and that all such, whether English or not, spiritualist or not, may be neglected without much harm. Once in a half century, or perhaps in a century, or two centuries, some thinker appears; Bacon and Hume in England, Descartes and Condillac in France, Kant and Hegel in Germany. At other times the stage is unoccupied, or ordinary men come forward, and offer the public that which the public likes—Sensualists or Idealists, according to the tendency of the day, with sufficient instruction and skill to play leading parts, and enough capacity to re-set old airs, well drilled in the works of their predecessors, but destitute of real invention—simple executant musicians, who stand in the place of composers. In Europe, at present, the stage is a blank. The Germans adapt and alter effete French materialism. The French listen from habit, but somewhat wearily and distractedly, to the scraps of melody and eloquent commonplace which their instructors have repeated to them for the last thirty years. In this deep silence, and from among these dull mediocrities, a master comes forward to speak. Nothing of the sort has been seen since Hegel.'

specimens. Here short lectures were delivered, new models of machinery were set to work; ladies were present and took an interest in the experiments; on the last day, full of enthusiasm, *God save the Queen* was sung. I admired this zeal, this solidity of mind, this organisation of science, these voluntary subscriptions, this aptitude for association and for labour, this great machine pushed on by so many arms, and so well fitted to accumulate, criticise, and classify facts. But yet, in this abundance, there was a void; when I read the Transactions, I thought I was present at a congress of heads of manufactories. All these learned men verified details and exchanged recipes. It was as though I listened to foremen, busy in communicating their processes for tanning leather or dyeing cotton: general ideas were wanting. I used to regret this to my friend; and in the evening, by his lamp, amidst that great silence in which the university town lay wrapped, we both tried to discover its reasons.

II.

One day I said to him: You lack philosophy—I mean, what the Germans call metaphysics. You have learned men, but you have no thinkers. Your God impedes you. He is the Supreme Cause, and you dare not reason on causes, out of respect for him. He is the most important personage in England, and I see clearly that he merits his position; for he forms part of your constitution, he is the guardian of your morality, he judges in final appeal on all questions whatsoever, he replaces with advantage the prefects and gendarmes with whom the nations on the Continent are still encumbered. Yet, this high rank has the inconvenience of all official positions; it produces a cant, prejudices, intolerance, and courtiers. Here, close by us, is poor Mr. Max Müller, who, in order to acclimatise the study of Sanscrit, was compelled to discover in the Vedas the worship of a moral God, that is to say, the religion of Paley and Addison. Some time ago, in London, I read a proclamation of the Queen, forbidding people to play cards, even in their own houses, on Sundays. It seems that, if I were robbed, I could not bring my thief to justice without taking a preliminary religious oath; for the judge has been known to send a complainant away who refused to take the oath, deny him justice, and insult him into the bargain. Every year, when we read the Queen's speech in your papers, we find there the compulsory mention of Divine Providence, which comes in mechanically, like the apostrophe to the immortal gods on the fourth page of a rhetorical declamation; and you remember that once, the pious phrase having been omitted, a second communication was made to Parliament for the express purpose of supplying it. All these cavillings and pedantry indicate to my mind a celestial monarchy; naturally it resembles all others; I mean that it relies more willingly on tradition and custom than on examination and reason. A monarchy never invited men to verify its credentials. As yours is, however, useful, well adapted to you, and moral, you are not revolted

by it; you submit to it without difficulty, you are, at heart, attached to it; you would fear, in touching it, to disturb the constitution and morality. You leave it in the clouds, amidst public homage. You fall back upon yourselves, confine yourselves to matters of fact, to minute dissections, to experiments in the laboratory. You go culling plants and collecting shells. Science is deprived of its head; but all is for the best, for practical life is improved, and dogma remains intact.

III.

You are truly French, he answered; you leap over facts, and all at once find yourself settled in a theory. I assure you that there are thinkers amongst us, and not far from hence, at Christ Church, for instance. One of them, the professor of Greek, has spoken so deeply on inspiration, the creation and final causes, that he is out of favour. Look at this little collection which has recently appeared, *Essays and Reviews;* your philosophic freedom of the last century, the latest conclusions of geology and cosmogony, the boldness of German exegesis, are here in abstract. Some things are wanting, amongst others the waggeries of Voltaire, the misty jargon of Germany, and the prosaic coarseness of Comte; to my mind, the loss is small. Wait twenty years, and you will find in London the ideas of Paris and Berlin.—But they will still be the ideas of Paris and Berlin. Whom have you that is original?—Stuart Mill.—Who is he?—A political writer. His little book *On Liberty* is as admirable as Rousseau's *Contrat Social* is bad.—That is a bold assertion.—No, for Mill decides as strongly for the independence of the individual as Rousseau for the despotism of the State.—Very well, but that is not enough to make a philosopher. What besides is he?—An economist who goes beyond his science, and subordinates production to man, instead of man to production.—Well, but this is not enough to make a philosopher. Is he anything else?—A logician. Very good; but of what school?—Of his own. I told you he was original.—Is he Hegelian?—By no means; he is too fond of facts and proofs.—Does he follow Port-Royal?—Still less; he is too well acquainted with modern sciences.—Does he imitate Condillac?—Certainly not; Condillac has only taught him to write well.—Who, then, are his friends?—Locke and Comte in the first rank; then Hume and Newton.—Is he a system-monger, a speculative reformer?—He has too much sense for that; he only arranges the best theories, and explains the best methods. He does not attitudinise majestically in the character of a restorer of science; he does not declare, like your Germans, that his book will open up a new era for humanity. He proceeds gradually, somewhat slowly, often creepingly, through a multitude of particular facts. He excels in giving precision to an idea, in disentangling a principle, in discovering it amongst a number of different facts; in refuting, distinguishing, arguing. He has the astuteness, patience, method, and sagacity of a lawyer.—Very well, you admit that I was

right. A lawyer, an ally of Locke, Newton, Comte, and Hume; we have here only English philosophy; but no matter. Has he reached a grand conception of the universe?—Yes.—Has he an individual and complete idea of nature and the mind?—Yes.—Has he combined the operations and discoveries of the intellect under a single principle which puts them all in a new light?—Yes; but we have to discover this principle.—That is your business, and I hope you will undertake it.—But I shall fall into abstract generalities.—There is no harm in that? —But this close reasoning will be like a quick-set hedge.—We will prick our fingers with it. But three men out of four would cast aside such speculations as idle.—So much the worse for them. For in what does the life of a nation or a century consist, except in the formation of such theories? We are not thoroughly men unless so engaged. If some dweller in another planet were to come down here to ask us the nature of our race, we should have to show him the five or six great ideas which we have formed of the mind and the world. That alone would give him the measure of our intelligence. Expound to me your theory, and I shall go away better instructed than after having seen the masses of brick, which you call London and Manchester.

1.—Experience.

I.

Let us begin, then, at the beginning, like logicians. Mill has written on logic. What is logic? It is a science. What is its object? The sciences; for, suppose that you have traversed the universe, and that you know it thoroughly, stars, earth, sun, heat, gravity, chemical affinities, the species of minerals, geological revolutions, plants, animals, human events, all that classifications and theories explain and embrace, there still remain these classifications and theories to be learnt. Not only is there an order of beings, but also an order of the thoughts which represent them; not only plants and animals, but also botany and zoology; not only lines, surfaces, volumes, and numbers, but also geometry and arithmetic. Sciences, then, are as real things as facts themselves, and therefore, as well as facts, become the subject of study. We can analyse them as we analyse facts, investigate their elements, composition, order, relations, and object. There is, therefore, a science of sciences; this science is called logic, and is the subject of Mill's work. It is no part of logic to analyse the operations of the mind, memory, the association of ideas, external perception, etc.; that is the business of psychology. We do not discuss the value of such operations, the veracity of our consciousness, the absolute certainty of our elementary knowledge; this belongs to metaphysics. We suppose our faculties to be at work, and we admit their primary discoveries. We take the instrument as nature has provided it, and we trust to its accuracy. We leave to others the task of taking its mechanism to pieces, and the

curiosity which criticises its results. Setting out from its primitive operations, we enquire how they are added to each other; how they are combined; how one is convertible into another; how, by dint of additions, combinations, and transformations, they finally compose a system of connected and increasing truths. We construct a theory of science, as others construct theories of vegetation, of the mind, or of numbers. Such is the idea of logic; and it is plain that it has, as other sciences, a real subject-matter, its distinct province, its manifest importance, its special method, and a certain future.

II.

Having premised so much, we observe that all these sciences which form the subject of logic, are but collections of propositions, and that each proposition merely connects or separates a subject and an attribute, that is, two names, a quality and a substance; that is to say, a thing and another thing. We must then ask what we understand by a thing, what we indicate by a name; in other words, what it is we recognise in objects, what we connect or separate, what is the subject-matter of all our propositions and all our science. There is a point in which all our several items of knowledge resemble one another. There is a common element which, continually repeated, constitutes all our ideas. There is, as it were, a minute primitive crystal which, indefinitely and variously added to itself, forms the whole mass, and which, once known, teaches us beforehand the laws and composition of the complex bodies which it has formed.

Now, when we attentively consider the idea which we form of anything, what do we find in it? Take first substances, that is to say, Bodies and Minds.[1] This table is brown, long, wide, three feet high, judging by the eye: that is, it forms a little spot in the field of vision; in other words, it produces a certain sensation on the optic nerve. It weighs ten pounds: that is, it would require to lift it an effort less than for a weight of eleven pounds, and greater than for a weight of

[1] 'It is certain, then, that a part of our notion of a body consists of the notion of a number of sensations of our own or of other sentient beings, habitually occurring simultaneously. My conception of the table at which I am writing is compounded of its visible form and size, which are complex sensations of sight; its tangible form and size, which are complex sensations of our organs of touch and of our muscles; its weight, which is also a sensation of touch and of the muscles; its colour, which is a sensation of sight; its hardness, which is a sensation of the muscles; its composition, which is another word for all the varieties of sensation which we receive, under various circumstances, from the wood of which it is made; and so forth. All or most of these various sensations frequently are, and, as we learn by experience, always might be, experienced simultaneously, or in many different orders of succession, at our own choice: and hence the thought of any one of them makes us think of the others, and the whole becomes mentally amalgamated into one mixed state of consciousness, which, in the language of Locke and Hartley, is termed a Complex Idea.'—MILL'S *System of Logic*, 4th ed. 2 vols., i. 62.

nine pounds; in other words, it produces a certain muscular sensation. It is hard and square, which means that, if first pushed, and then run over by the hand, it will excite two distinct kinds of muscular sensations. And so on. When I examine closely what I know of it, I find that I know nothing else except the impressions it makes upon me. Our idea of a body comprises nothing else than this: we know nothing of it but the sensations it excites in us; we determine it by the nature, number, and order of these sensations; we know nothing of its inner nature, nor whether it has one; we simply affirm that it is the unknown cause of these sensations. When we say that a body has existed in the absence of our sensations, we mean simply that if, during that time, we had been within reach of it, we should have had sensations which we have not had. We never define it save by our present or past, future or possible, complex or simple impressions. This is so true, that philosophers like Berkeley have maintained, with some show of truth, that matter is a creature of the imagination, and that the whole universe of sense is reducible to an order of sensations. It is at least so, as far as our knowledge is concerned; and the judgments which compose our sciences, have reference only to the impressions by which things are manifested to us.

So, again, with the mind. We may well admit that there is in us a soul, an 'ego,' a subject or recipient of our sensations, and of our other modes of being, distinct from those sensations and modes of existence; but we know nothing of it. Mr. Mill says:

'For, as our conception of a body is that of an unknown exciting cause of sensations, so our conception of a mind is that of an unknown recipient, or percipient, of them; and not of them alone, but of all our other feelings. As body is the mysterious something which excites the mind to feel, so mind is the mysterious something which feels, and thinks. It is unnecessary to give in the case of mind, as we gave in the case of matter, a particular statement of the sceptical system by which its existence as a Thing in itself, distinct from the series of what are denominated its states, is called in question. But it is necessary to remark, that on the inmost nature of the thinking principle, as well as on the inmost nature of matter, we are, and with our faculties must always remain, entirely in the dark. All which we are aware of, even in our own minds, is a certain "thread of consciousness;" a series of feelings, that is, of sensations, thoughts, emotions, and volitions, more or less numerous and complicated.'[1]

We have no clearer idea of mind than of matter; we can say nothing more about it than about matter. So that substances, of whatever kind, bodies or minds, within or without us, are never for us more than tissues, more or less complex, more or less regular, of which our impressions and modes of being form all the threads.

This is still more evident in the case of attributes than of substances. When I say that snow is white, I mean that, when snow is presented to my sight, I have the sensation of whiteness. When I say that fire

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 68.

is hot, I mean that, when near the fire, I have the sensation of heat. We call a mind devout, superstitious, meditative, or gay, simply meaning that the ideas, the emotions, the volitions, designated by these words, recur frequently in the series of its modes of being.[1] When we say that bodies are heavy, divisible, moveable, we mean simply that, left to themselves, they will fall; when cut, they will separate; or when pushed, they will move: that is, under such and such circumstances they will produce such and such a sensation in our muscles, or our sight. An attribute always designates a mode of being, or a series of our modes of being. In vain we disguise these modes by grouping, concealing them under abstract words, dividing and transforming them, so that we are frequently puzzled to recognise them: whenever we look at the bottom of our words and ideas, we find them, and nothing but them. Mill says:

'Take the following example: A generous person is worthy of honour. Who would expect to recognise here a case of coexistence between phenomena? But so it is. The attribute which causes a person to be termed generous, is ascribed to him on the ground of states of his mind, and particulars of his conduct; both are phenomena; the former are facts of internal consciousness, the latter, so far as distinct from the former, are physical facts, or perceptions of the senses. Worthy of honour, admits of a similar analysis. Honour, as here used, means a state of approving and admiring emotion, followed on occasion by corresponding outward acts. "Worthy of honour" connotes all this, together with an approval of the act

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[1] 'Every attribute of a mind consists either in being itself affected in a certain way, or affecting other minds in a certain way. Considered in itself, we can predicate nothing of it but the series of its own feelings. When we say of any mind, that it is devout, or superstitious, or meditative, or cheerful, we mean that the ideas, emotions, or volitions implied in those words, form a frequently recurring part of the series of feelings, or states of consciousness, which fill up the sentient existence of that mind.

'In addition, however, to those attributes of a mind which are grounded on its own states of feeling, attributes may also be ascribed to it, in the same manner as to a body, grounded on the feelings which it excites in other minds. A mind does not, indeed, like a body, excite sensations, but it may excite thoughts or emotions. The most important example of attributes ascribed on this ground, is the employment of terms expressive of approbation or blame. When, for example, we say of any character, or (in other words) of any mind, that it is admirable, we mean that the contemplation of it excites the sentiment of admiration; and indeed somewhat more, for the word implies that we not only feel admiration, but approve that sentiment in ourselves. In some cases, under the semblance of a single attribute, two are really predicated: one of them, a state of the mind itself; the other, a state with which other minds are affected by thinking of it. As when we say of any one that he is generous. The word generosity expresses a certain state of mind, but being a term of praise, it also expresses that this state of mind excites in us another mental state, called approbation. The assertion made, therefore, is twofold, and of the following purport: Certain feelings form habitually a part of this person's sentient existence; and the idea of those feelings of his, excites the sentiment of approbation in ourselves or others.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 80.

of showing honour. All these are phenomena; states of internal consciousness, accompanied or followed by physical facts. When we say, A generous person is worthy of honour, we affirm coexistence between the two complicated phenomena connoted by the two terms respectively. We affirm, that wherever and whenever the inward feelings and outward facts implied in the word generosity, have place, then and there the existence and manifestation of an inward feeling, honour, would be followed in our minds by another inward feeling, approval.'[1]

In vain we turn about as we please, we remain still in the same circle. Whether the object be an attribute or a substance, complex or abstract, compound or simple, its material is to us always the same; it is made up only of our modes of being. Our mind is to nature what a thermometer is to a boiler: we define the properties of nature by the impressions of our mind, as we indicate the conditions of the boiling water by the changes of the thermometer. Of both we know but conditions and changes; we make up both of isolated and transient facts; a thing is for us but an aggregate of phenomena. These are the sole elements of our knowledge: consequently the whole effort of science will be to add or to link facts to facts.

III.

This brief phrase is the abstract of the whole system. Let us master it, for it explains all Mill's theories. He has defined and innovated everything from this starting-point. In all forms and all degrees of knowledge, he has recognised only the knowledge of facts, and of their relations.

Now we know that logic has two corner-stones, the Theories of Definition and of Proof. From the days of Aristotle logicians have spent their time in polishing them. They have only dared to touch them respectfully, as if they were sacred. At most, from time to time, some innovator ventured to turn them over cautiously, to put them in a better light. Mill shapes, cuts, turns them over, and replaces them both in a similar manner and by the same means.

IV.

I am quite aware that now-a-days men laugh at those who reason on definitions; the laughers deserve to be laughed at. There is no theory more fertile in universal and important results; it is the root by which the whole tree of human science grows and lives. For to define things is to mark out their nature. To introduce a new idea of definition is to introduce a new idea of the nature of things; it is to tell us what beings are, of what they are composed, into what elements they are capable of being resolved. In this lies the merit of these dry speculations; the philosopher seems occupied with arranging mere formulas; the fact is, that in them he encloses the universe.

Take, say logicians, an animal, a plant, a feeling, a geometrical

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 110.

figure, an object or group of objects of any kind. Doubtless the object has its properties, but it has also its essence. It is manifested to the outer world by an indefinite number of effects and qualities; but all these modes of being are the results or products of its inner nature. There is within it a certain hidden substratum which alone is primitive and important, without which it can neither exist nor be conceived, and which constitutes its being and our notion of it.[1] They call the propositions which denote this essence definitions, and assert that the best part of our knowledge consists of such propositions.

On the other hand, Mill says that these kinds of propositions teach us nothing; they show the mere sense of a word, and are purely verbal.[2] What do I learn by being told that man is a rational animal, or that a triangle is a space contained by three lines? The first part of such a phrase expresses by an abbreviative word what the second part expresses in a developed phrase. You tell me the same thing twice over; you put the same fact into two different expressions; you do not add one fact to another, but you go from one fact to its equivalent. Your proposition is not instructive. You might collect a million such, my mind would remain entirely void; I should have read a dictionary, but not have acquired a single piece of knowledge. Instead of saying that essential propositions are important, and those relating to qualities merely accessory, you ought to say that the first are accessory, and the second important. I learn nothing by being told that a circle is a figure formed by the revolution of a straight line about one of its points as centre; I do learn something when told that the chords which subtend equal arcs in the circle are themselves equal, or that three given points determine the circumference. What we call the nature of a being is the connected system of facts which constitute that being. The nature of a carnivorous mammal consists in the fact that the property of giving milk, and all its implied peculiarities of structure, are combined with the possession of sharp teeth, instincts of prey, and the corresponding faculties. Such are the elements which compose its nature. They are facts linked together as mesh to mesh in a net. We perceive a few of

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[1] According to idealist logicians, this being is arrived at by examining our notion of it; and the idea, on analysis, reveals the essence. According to the classifying school, we arrive at the being by placing the object in its group, and the notion is defined by stating the genus and the difference. Both agree in believing that we are capable of grasping the essence.

[2] 'An essential proposition, then, is one which is purely verbal; which asserts of a thing under a particular name, only what is asserted of it in the fact of calling it by that name; and which therefore either gives no information, or gives it respecting the name, not the thing. Non-essential or accidental propositions, on the contrary, may be called Real Propositions, in opposition to Verbal. They predicate of a thing, some fact not involved in the signification of the name by which the proposition speaks of it; some attribute not connoted by that name.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 127.

them; and we know that, beyond our present knowledge and our future experience, the network extends to infinitely its interwoven and manifold threads. The essence or nature of a being is the indefinite sum of its properties. Mill says:

'The definition, they say, unfolds the nature of the thing: but no definition can unfold its whole nature; and every proposition in which any quality whatever is predicated of the thing, unfolds some part of its nature. The true state of the case we take to be this. All definitions are of names, and of names only; but in some definitions it is clearly apparent, that nothing is intended except to explain the meaning of the word; while in others, besides explaining the meaning of the word, it is intended to be implied that there exists a thing, corresponding to the word.'[1]

Abandon, then, the vain hope of eliminating from properties some primitive and mysterious being, the source and abstract of the whole; leave entities to Duns Scotus; do not fancy that, by probing your ideas in the German fashion, by classifying objects according to genera and species like the schoolmen, by reviving the nominalism of the Middle Ages or the riddles of Hegelian metaphysics, you will ever supply the want of experience. There are no definitions of things; if there are definitions, they only define names. No phrase can tell me what a horse is; but there are phrases which will inform me what is meant by these five letters. No phrase can exhaust the inexhaustible sum of qualities which make up a being; but several phrases may point out the facts corresponding to a word. In this case definition is possible, because we can always make an analysis, which will enable us to pass from the abstract and summary term to the attributes which it represents, and from these attributes to the inner or concrete feelings which constitute their foundation. From the term 'dog' it enables us to rise to the attributes 'mammiferous,' 'carnivorous,' and others which it represents; and from these attributes to the sensations of sight, of touch, of the dissecting knife, on which they are founded. It reduces the compound to the simple, the derived to the primitive. It brings back our knowledge to its origin. It transforms words into facts. If some definitions, such as those of geometry, seem capable of giving rise to long sequences of new truths,[2] it is because, in addition to the explanation of a word, they contain the affirmation of a thing. In the definition of a triangle

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[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 162.

[2] 'The definition above given of a triangle obviously comprises not one, but two propositions, perfectly distinguishable. The one is, "There may exist a figure bounded by three straight lines;" the other, "And this figure may be termed a triangle." The former of these propositions is not a definition at all; the latter is a mere nominal definition, or explanation of the use and application of a term. The first is susceptible of truth or falsehood, and may therefore be made the foundation of a train of reasoning. The latter can neither be true nor false; the only character it is susceptible of is that of conformity to the ordinary usage of language.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 162.

there are two distinct propositions,—the one stating that 'there may exist a figure bounded by three straight lines;' the other, that 'such a figure may be termed a triangle.' The first is a postulate, the second a definition. The first is hidden, the second evident; the first may be true or false, the second can be neither. The first is the source of all possible theorems as to triangles, the second only resumes in a word the facts contained in the other. The first is a truth, the second is a convention; the first is a part of science, the second an expedient of language. The first expresses a possible relation between three straight lines, the second gives a name to this relation. The first alone is fruitful, because it alone conforms to the nature of every fruitful proposition, and connects two facts. Let us, then, understand exactly the nature of our knowledge: it relates either to words or to things, or to both at once. If it is a matter of words, as in the definition of names, it attempts to refer words to our primitive feelings, that is to say, to the facts which form their elements. If it relates to beings, as in propositions about things, its whole effort is to link fact to fact, in order to connect the finite number of known properties with the infinite number to be known. If both are involved, as in the definitions of names which conceal a proposition relating to things, it attempts to do both. Everywhere its operation is the same. The whole matter in any case is either to understand each other,—that is, to revert to facts, or to learn,—that is, to add facts to facts.

V.

The first rampart is destroyed; our adversaries take refuge behind the second—the Theory of Proof. This theory has passed for two thousand years for an acquired, definite, unassailable truth. Many have deemed it useless, but no one has dared to call it false. On all sides it has been considered as an established theorem. Let us examine it closely and attentively. What is a proof? According to logicians, it is a syllogism. And what is a syllogism? A group of three propositions of this kind: 'All men are mortal; Prince Albert is a man; therefore Prince Albert is mortal.' Here we have the type of a proof, and every complete proof is conformable to this type. Now what is there, according to logicians, in this proof? A general proposition concerning all men, which gives rise to a particular proposition concerning a certain man. From the first we pass to the second, because the second is contained in the first; from the general to the particular, because the particular is comprised in the general. The second is but an instance of the first; its truth is contained beforehand in that of the first, and this is why it is a truth. In fact, as soon as the conclusion is no longer contained in the premises, the reasoning is false, and all the complicated rules of the Middle Ages have been reduced by the

Port-Royalists to this single rule, 'The conclusion must be contained in the premises. Thus the whole process of the human mind in its reasonings consists in recognising in individuals what is known in the class; in affirming in detail what has been established for the aggregate; in laying down a second time, and instance by instance, what has been laid down once for all at first.

By no means, replies Mill; for if it were so, our reasoning would be good for nothing. It is not a progress, but a repetition. When I have affirmed that all men are mortal, I have affirmed implicitly that Prince Albert is mortal. In speaking of the whole class, that is to say, of all the individuals of the class, I have spoken of each individual, and therefore of Prince Albert, who is one of them. I say nothing new, then, when I now mention him expressly. My conclusion teaches me nothing; it adds nothing to my positive knowledge; it only puts in another shape a knowledge which I already possessed. It is not fruitful, but purely verbal. If, then, reasoning be what logicians represent it, it is not instructive. I know as much of the subject at the beginning of my reasoning as at the end. I have transformed words into other words; I have been moving without gaining ground. Now this cannot be the case; for, in fact, reasoning does teach us new truths. I learn a new truth when I discover that Prince Albert is mortal, and I discover it by dint of reasoning; for, since he is still alive, I cannot have learnt it by direct observation. Thus logicians are mistaken; and beyond the scholastic theory of syllogism, which reduces reasoning to substitutions of words, we must look for a positive theory of proof, which shall explain how it is that, by the process of reasoning, we discover facts.

For this purpose, it is sufficient to observe, that general propositions are not the true proof of particular propositions. They seem so, but are not. It is not from the mortality of all men that I conclude Prince Albert to be mortal; the premises are elsewhere, and in the background. The general proposition is but a memento, a sort of abbreviative register, to which I have consigned the fruit of my experience. This memento may be regarded as a notebook to which we refer to refresh our memory; but it is not from the book that we draw our knowledge, but from the objects which we have seen. My memento is valuable only for the facts which it recalls. My general proposition has no value except for the particular facts which it sums up.

'The mortality of John, Thomas, and company is, after all, the whole evidence we have for the mortality of the Duke of Wellington. Not one iota is added to the proof by interpolating a general proposition. Since the individual cases are all the evidence we can possess, evidence which no logical form into which we choose to throw it can make greater than it is; and since that evidence is either sufficient in itself, or, if insufficient for the one purpose, cannot be sufficient for the other; I am unable to see why we should be forbidden to take the shortest

cut from these sufficient premises to the conclusion, and constrained to travel the "high priori road" by the arbitrary fiat of logicians.'[1]

'The true reason which makes us believe that Prince Albert will die is, that his ancestors, and our ancestors, and all the other persons who were their contemporaries, are dead. These facts are the true premises of our reasoning.' It is from them that we have drawn the general proposition; they have taught us its scope and truth; it confines itself to mentioning them in a shorter form; it receives its whole substance from them; they act by it and through it, to lead us to the conclusion to which it seems to give rise. It is only their representative, and on occasion they do without it. Children, ignorant people, animals know that the sun will rise, that water will drown them, that fire will burn them, without employing this general proposition. They reason, and we reason, too, not from the general to the particular, but from particular to particular:

'All inference is from particulars to particulars: General propositions are merely registers of such inferences already made, and short formulæ for making more: The major premiss of a syllogism, consequently, is a formula of this description: and the conclusion is not an inference drawn *from* the formula, but an inference drawn *according* to the formula: the real logical antecedent, or premisses, being the particular facts from which the general proposition was collected by induction. Those facts, and the individual instances which supplied them, may have been forgotten; but a record remains, not indeed descriptive of the facts themselves, but showing how those cases may be distinguished respecting which the facts, when known, were considered to warrant a given inference. According to the indications of this record we draw our conclusion; which is, to all intents and purposes, a conclusion from the forgotten facts. For this it is essential that we should read the record correctly: and the rules of the syllogism are a set of precautions to ensure our doing so.'[2]

'If we had sufficiently capacious memories, and a sufficient power of maintaining order among a huge mass of details, the reasoning could go on without any general propositions; they are mere formulæ for inferring particulars from particulars.'[3]

Here, as before, logicians are mistaken: they gave the highest place to verbal operations, and left the really fruitful operations in the background. They gave the preference to words over facts. They carried on the nominalism of the Middle Ages. They mistook the explanation of names for the nature of things, and the transformation of ideas for the progress of the mind. It is for us to overturn this order in logic, as we have overturned it in science, to exalt particular and instructive facts, and to give them in our theories that superiority and importance which our practice has conferred upon them for three centuries past.

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[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 211. [2] *Ibid.* i. 218. [3] *Ibid.* i. 240.

VI.

There remains a kind of philosophical fortress in which the Idealists have taken refuge. At the origin of all proof are Axioms, from which all proofs are derived. Two straight lines cannot enclose a space; two things, equal to a third, are equal to one another; if equals be added to equals, the wholes are equal. These are instructive propositions, for they express, not the meanings of words, but the relations of things. And, moreover, they are fertile propositions; for arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are all the result of their truth. On the other hand, they are not the work of experience, for we need not actually see with our eyes two straight lines in order to know that they cannot enclose a space; it is enough for us to refer to the inner mental conception which we have of them: the evidence of our senses is not needed for this purpose; our belief arises wholly, with its full force, from the simple comparison of our ideas. Moreover, experience follows these two lines only to a limited distance, ten, a hundred, a thousand feet; and the axiom is true for a thousand, a hundred thousand, a million miles, and for an unlimited distance. Thus, beyond the point at which experience ceases, it is no longer experience which establishes the axiom. Finally, the axiom is a necessary truth; that is to say, the contrary is inconceivable. We cannot imagine a space enclosed by two straight lines: as soon as we imagine the space enclosed, the two lines cease to be straight; and as soon as we imagine the two lines to be straight, the space ceases to be enclosed. In the assertion of axioms, the constituent ideas are irresistibly drawn together. In the negation of axioms, the constituent ideas inevitably repel each other. Now this does not happen with truths of experience: they state an accidental relation, not a necessary connection; they lay down that two facts are connected, and not that they must be connected; they show us that bodies are heavy, not that they must be heavy. Thus, axioms are not, and cannot be, the results of experience. They are not so, because we can form them mentally without the aid of experience; they cannot be so, because the nature and scope of their truths lie without the limits of experimental truths. They have another and a deeper source. They have a wider scope, and they come from elsewhere.

Not so, answers Mill. Here again you reason like a schoolman; you forget the facts concealed behind your conceptions; for examine your first argument. Doubtless you can discover, without making use of your eyes, and by purely mental contemplation, that two straight lines cannot enclose a space; but this contemplation is but a displaced experiment. Imaginary lines here replace real lines: you construct the figure in your mind instead of on paper: your imagination fulfils the office of a diagram on paper: you trust to it as you trust to the diagram, and it is as good as the other; for in regard to figures and

lines the imagination exactly reproduces the sensation. What you have seen with your eyes open, you will see again exactly the same a minute afterwards with your eyes closed; and you can study geometrical properties transferred to the field of mental vision, as accurately as if they existed in the field of actual sight. There are, therefore, experiments of the brain as there are ocular ones; and it is after just such an experiment that you deny to two straight lines, indefinitely prolonged, the property of enclosing a space. You need not for this purpose pursue them to infinity, you need only transfer yourself in imagination to the point where they converge, and there you have the impression of a bent line, that is, of one which ceases to be straight.[1] Your presence there in imagination takes the place of an actual presence; you can affirm by it what you affirmed by your actual presence, and as positively. The first is only the second in a more commodious form, with greater flexibility and scope. It is like using a telescope instead of the naked eye; the revelations of the telescope are propositions of experience; so are those of the imagination. As to the argument which distinguishes axioms from propositions of experience under the pretext that the contraries of the latter are conceivable, while the contraries of axioms are inconceivable, it is nugatory, for this distinction does not exist. Nothing prevents the contraries of certain propositions of experience from being conceivable, and the contraries of others inconceivable. That depends on the constitution of our minds. It may be that in some cases the mind may contradict its experience, and in others not. It is possible that in certain cases our conceptions may differ from our perceptions, and sometimes not. It may be that, in certain cases, external sight is opposed to internal, and in certain others not. Now, we have already seen that in the case of figures, the internal sight exactly reproduces the external. Therefore, in axioms of figures, the mental sight cannot be opposed to the actual; imagination cannot contradict sensation. In other words, the contraries of such axioms will be inconceivable. Thus axioms, although their contraries are inconceivable, are experiments of a certain class, and it is because they are so that their contraries are inconceiv-

[1] 'For though, in order actually to see that two given lines never meet, it would be necessary to follow them to infinity; yet without doing so we may know that if they ever do meet, or if, after diverging from one another, they begin again to approach, this must take place not at an infinite, but at a finite distance. Supposing, therefore, such to be the case, we can transport ourselves thither in imagination, and can frame a mental image of the appearance which one or both of the lines must present at that point, which we may rely on as being precisely similar to the reality. Now, whether we fix our contemplation upon this imaginary picture, or call to mind the generalizations we have had occasion to make from former ocular observation, we learn by the evidence of experience, that a line which, after diverging from another straight line, begins to approach to it, produces the impression on our senses which we describe by the expression "a bent line," not by the expression "a straight line."'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 364.

able. At every point there results this conclusion, which is the abstract of the system: every instructive or fruitful proposition is derived from experience, and is simply a connecting together of facts.

VII.

Hence it follows that Induction is the only key to nature. This theory is Mill's masterpiece. Only so thorough-going a partisan of experience could have constructed the theory of Induction.

What, then, is Induction?

'Induction is that operation of the mind by which we infer that what we know to be true in a particular case or cases, will be true in all cases which resemble the former in certain assignable respects. In other words, Induction is the process by which we conclude that what is true of certain individuals of a class is true of the whole class, or that what is true at certain times will be true in similar circumstances at all times.'[1]

This is the reasoning by which, having observed that Peter, John, and a greater or less number of men have died, we conclude that all men will die. In short, induction connects 'mortality' with the quality of 'man;' that is to say, connects two general facts ordinarily successive, and asserts that the first is the Cause of the second.

This amounts to saying that the course of nature is uniform. But induction does not set out from this axiom, it leads up to it; we do not find it at the beginning, but at the end, of our researches.[2] Fundamentally, experience presupposes nothing beyond itself. No *à priori* principle comes to authorise or guide her. We observe that this stone has fallen, that this hot coal has burnt us, that this man has died, and we have no other means of induction except the addition and comparison of these little isolated and transient facts. We learn by simple practical experience that the sun gives light, that bodies fall, that water quenches thirst, and we have no other means of extending or criticising these inductions than by other like inductions. Every observation and every induction draws its value from itself, and from similar ones. It is always experience which judges of experience, and induction of induction. The body of our truths has not, then, a soul distinct from it, and

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[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 315.

[2] 'We must first observe, that there is a principle implied in the very statement of what Induction is; an assumption with regard to the course of nature and the order of the universe: namely, that there are such things in nature as parallel cases; that what happens once, will, under a sufficient degree of similarity of circumstances, happen again, and not only again, but as often as the same circumstances recur. This, I say, is an assumption, involved in every case of induction. And, if we consult the actual course of nature, we find that the assumption is warranted. The universe, so far as known to us, is so constituted, that whatever is true in any one case, is true in all cases of a certain description; the only difficulty is, to find *what* description.'—Mill's *Logic*, i. 337.

vivifying it; it subsists by the harmony of all its parts taken as a whole, and by the vitality of each part taken separately.

'Why is it that, with exactly the same amount of evidence, both negative and positive, we did not reject the assertion that there are black swans, while we should refuse credence to any testimony which asserted that there were men wearing their heads underneath their shoulders? The first assertion was more credible than the latter. But why more credible? So long as neither phenomenon had been actually witnessed, what reason was there for finding the one harder to be believed than the other? Apparently because there is less constancy in the colours of animals, than in the general structure of their internal anatomy. But how do we know this? Doubtless from experience. It appears, then, that we need experience to inform us in what degree, and in what cases, or sorts of cases, experience is to be relied on. Experience must be consulted in order to learn from it under what circumstances arguments from it will be valid. We have no ulterior test to which we subject experience in general; but we make experience its own test. Experience testifies, that among the uniformities which it exhibits, or seems to exhibit, some are more to be relied on than others; and uniformity, therefore, may be presumed, from any given number of instances, with a greater degree of assurance, in proportion as the case belongs to a class in which the uniformities have hitherto been found more uniform.'[1]

Experience is the only test, and it is all we can have.

Let us then consider how, without any help but that of experience, we can form general propositions, especially the most numerous and important of all, those which connect two successive events, by saying that the first is the cause of the second.

Cause is a great word; let us examine it. It carries in itself a whole philosophy. From the idea we have of Cause depend all our notions of nature. To give a new idea of Causation is to transform human thought; and we shall see how Mill, like Hume and Comte, but better than them, has put this idea into a new shape.

What is a cause? When Mill says that the contact of iron with moist air produces rust, or that heat dilates bodies, he does not speak of the mysterious bond by which metaphysicians connect cause and effect. He does not busy himself with the intimate force and generative virtue which certain philosophers insert between the thing producing and the product. Mill says:

'The only notion of a cause, which the theory of induction requires, is such a notion as can be gained from experience. The Law of Causation, the recognition of which is the main pillar of inductive science, is but the familiar truth, that invariability of succession is found by observation to obtain between every fact in nature and some other fact which has preceded it; independently of all consideration respecting the ulterior mode of production of phenomena, and of every other question regarding the nature of "Things in themselves."'[2]

No other foundation underlies these two expressions. We mean simply that everywhere, always, the contact of iron with the moist air will be

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 351.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 359.

followed by the appearance of rust; the application of heat by the dilatation of bodies:

'The real cause, is the whole of these antecedents.'[1]

'There is no scientific foundation for distinguishing between the cause of a phenomenon and the conditions of its happening. . . . The distinction drawn between the patient and the agent is purely verbal.'

'The cause, then, philosophically speaking, is the sum total of the conditions, positive and negative, taken together; the whole of the contingencies of every description, which being realised, the consequent invariably follows.'[2]

Much argument has been expended on the word necessary:

'If there be any meaning which confessedly belongs to the term necessity, it is *unconditionalness*. That which is necessary, that which *must* be, means that which will be, whatever supposition we may make in regard to all other things.'[3]

This is all we mean when we assert that the notion of cause includes the notion of necessity. We mean that the antecedent is sufficient and complete, that there is no need to suppose any additional antecedent, that it contains all requisite conditions, and that no other condition need exist. To follow unconditionally, then, is the whole notion of cause and effect. We have none else. Philosophers are mistaken when they discover in our will a different type of causation, and declare it an example of efficient cause in act and in exercise. We see nothing of the kind, but there, as elsewhere, we find only continuous successions. We do not see a fact engendering another fact, but a fact accompanying another. 'Our will,' says Mill, 'produces our bodily actions as cold produces ice, or as a spark produces an explosion of gunpowder.' There is here, as elsewhere, an antecedent, the resolution or state of mind, and a consequent, the effort or physical sensation. Experience connects them, and enables us to foresee that the effort will follow the resolution, as it enables us to foresee that the explosion of gunpowder will follow the contact of the spark. Let us then have done with all these psychological illusions, and seek only, under the names of cause and effect, for phenomena which form pairs without exception or condition.

Now, to establish these connections of phenomena, Mill discovers four methods, and only four,—namely, the Methods of Agreement,[4] of

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[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 360. [2] *Ibid.* i. 365. [3] *Ibid.* i. 372.

[4] 'If we take fifty crucibles of molten matter and let them cool, and fifty solutions and let them evaporate, all will crystallize. Sulphur, sugar, alum, salt—substances, temperatures, circumstances—all are as different as they can be. We find one, and only one, common fact—the change from the liquid to the solid state—and conclude, therefore, that this change is the invariable antecedent of crystallization. Here we have an example of the Method of Agreement. Its canon is:—

'"I. If two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree, is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon."'—Mill's *Logic*, i. 422.

Difference,[1] of Residues,[2] and of Concomitant Variations.[3] These are the only ways by which we can penetrate into nature. There are no other, and these are everywhere. And they all employ the same artifice, that is to say, *elimination;* for, in fact, induction is nothing else. You have two groups, one of antecedents, the other of consequents, each of them containing more or less elements, ten, for example. To what antecedent is each consequent joined? Is the first consequent joined to the first antecedent, or to the third, or sixth? The whole difficulty, and the only possible solution, lie there. To resolve the difficulty, and

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[1] 'A bird in the air breathes; plunged into carbonic acid gas, it ceases to breathe. In other words, in the second case, suffocation ensues. In other respects the two cases are as similar as possible, since we have the same bird in both, and they take place in immediate succession. They differ only in the circumstance of immersion in carbonic acid gas being substituted for immersion in the atmosphere, and we conclude that this circumstance is invariably followed by suffocation. The Method of Difference is here employed. Its canon is:—

'"II. If an instance in which the phenomenon under investigation occurs, and an instance in which it does not occur, have every circumstance in common save one, that one occurring only in the former; the circumstance in which alone the two instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon."'—MILL's *Logic*, i. 423.

[2] ['A combination of these methods is sometimes employed, and is termed the Indirect Method of Difference, or the Joint Method of Agreement and Difference. It is, in fact, a double employment of the Method of Agreement, first applying that method to instances in which the phenomenon in question occurs, and then to instances in which it does not occur. The following is its canon:—

'"III. If two or more instances in which the phenomenon occurs have only one circumstance in common, while two or more instances in which it does not occur have nothing in common, save the absence of that circumstance; the circumstance in which alone the two sets of instances differ, is the effect, or the cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon."']—MILL's *Logic*, i. 429.

'If we take two groups—one of antecedents and one of consequents—and can succeed in connecting by previous investigations all the antecedents but one to their respective consequents, and all the consequents but one to their respective antecedents, we conclude that the remaining antecedent is connected to the remaining consequent. For example, scientific men had calculated what ought to be the velocity of sound according to the laws of the propagation of sonorous waves, but found that a sound actually travelled quicker than their calculations had indicated. This surplus or residue of speed was a consequent for which an antecedent had to be found. Laplace discovered the antecedent in the heat developed by the condensation of each sonorous wave, and this new element, when introduced into the calculation, rendered it perfectly accurate. This is an example of the Method of Residues, the canon of which is as follows:—

'"IV. Subduct from any phenomenon such part as is known by previous inductions to be the effect of certain antecedents, and the residue of the phenomenon is the effect of the remaining antecedents."'—MILL's *Logic*, i. 431.

[3] 'Let us take two facts—as the presence of the earth and the oscillation of the pendulum, or again the presence of the moon and the flow of the tide. To connect these phenomena directly, we should have to suppress the first of them, and see

to effect the solution, we must eliminate, that is, exclude those antecedents which are not connected with the consequent we are considering.[1] But as we cannot exclude them effectually, and as in nature the pair of phenomena we are seeking is always surrounded with circumstances, we collect various cases, which by their diversity enable the mind to lop off these circumstances, and to discover the pair of phenomena distinctly. In short, we can only perform induction by discovering pairs of phenomena: we form these only by isolation; we isolate only by means of comparisons.

VIII.

These are the rules; an example will make them clearer. We will show you the methods in exercise; here is an example which combines nearly the whole of them, namely, Dr. Well's theory of dew. I will give it to you in Mill's own words, which are so clear that you must have the pleasure of pondering over them:

'We must separate dew from rain and the moisture of fogs, and limit the application of the term to what is really meant, which is, the spontaneous appearance of moisture on substances exposed in the open air when no rain or *visible* wet is falling.'[2]

What is the cause of the phenomena we have thus defined, and how was that cause discovered?

'"Now, here we have analogous phenomena in the moisture which bedews a cold metal or stone when we breathe upon it; that which appears on a glass of water fresh from the well in hot weather; that which appears on the inside of windows when sudden rain or hail chills the external air; that which runs down

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if this suppression would occasion the stoppage of the second. Now, in both instances, such suppression is impossible. So we employ an indirect means of connecting the phenomena. We observe that all the variations of the one correspond to certain variations of the other; that all the oscillations of the pendulum correspond to certain different positions of the earth; that all states of the tide correspond to positions of the moon. From this we conclude that the second fact is the antecedent of the first. These are examples of the Method of Concomitant Variations. Its canon is:—

'"V. Whatever phenomenon varies in any manner whenever another phenomenon varies in some particular manner, is either a cause or an effect of that phenomenon, or is connected with it through some fact of causation."'—MILL's *Logic*, i. 435.

[1] 'The Method of Agreement,' says Mill (*Logic*, i. 424), 'stands on the ground that whatever can be eliminated, is not connected with the phenomenon by any law. The Method of Difference has for its foundation, that whatever can *not* be eliminated, *is* connected with the phenomenon by a law.' The Method of Residues is a case of the Method of Differences. The Method of Concomitant Variations is another case of the same method; with this distinction, that it is applied, not to the phenomena, but to their variations.

[2] This quotation, and all the others in this paragraph, are taken from Mill's *Logic*, i. 451–9. Mr. Mill quotes from Sir John Herschel's *Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*.

our walls when, after a long frost, a warm moist thaw comes on." Comparing these cases, we find that they all contain the phenomenon which was proposed as the subject of investigation. Now "all these instances agree in one point, the coldness of the object dewed in comparison with the air in contact with it." But there still remains the most important case of all, that of nocturnal dew: does the same circumstance exist in this case? "Is it a fact that the object dewed *is* colder than the air? Certainly not, one would at first be inclined to say; for what is to *make* it so? But . . . the experiment is easy; we have only to lay a thermometer in contact with the dewed substance, and hang one at a little distance above it, out of reach of its influence. The experiment has been therefore made; the question has been asked, and the answer has been invariably in the affirmative. Whenever an object contracts dew, it *is* colder than the air."

'Here then is a complete application of the Method of Agreement, establishing the fact of an invariable connection between the deposition of dew on a surface, and the coldness of that surface compared with the external air. But which of these is cause, and which effect? or are they both effects of something else? On this subject the Method of Agreement can afford us no light: we must call in a more potent method. "We must collect more facts, or, which comes to the same thing, vary the circumstances; since every instance in which the circumstances differ is a fresh fact: and especially, we must note the contrary or negative cases, *i.e.* where no dew is produced:" for a comparison between instances of dew and instances of no dew, is the condition necessary to bring the Method of Difference into play.

'"Now, first, no dew is produced on the surface of polished metals, but it *is* very copiously on glass, both exposed with their faces upwards, and in some cases the under side of a horizontal plate of glass is also dewed." Here is an instance in which the effect is produced, and another instance in which it is not produced; but we cannot yet pronounce, as the canon of the Method of Difference requires, that the latter instance agrees with the former in all its circumstances except one: for the differences between glass and polished metals are manifold, and the only thing we can as yet be sure of is, that the cause of dew will be found among the circumstances by which the former substance is distinguished from the latter.'

To detect this particular circumstance of difference, we have but one practicable method, that of Concomitant Variations:

'"In the cases of polished metal and polished glass, the contrast shows evidently that the *substance* has much to do with the phenomenon; therefore let the substance *alone* be diversified as much as possible, by exposing polished surfaces of various kinds. This done, a *scale of intensity* becomes obvious. Those polished substances are found to be most strongly dewed which conduct heat worst, while those which conduct well resist dew most effectually." . . .

'The conclusion obtained is, that *cæteris paribus* the deposition of dew is in some proportion to the power which the body possesses of resisting the passage of heat; and that this, therefore (or something connected with this), must be at least one of the causes which assist in producing the deposition of dew on the surface.

'"But if we expose rough surfaces instead of polished, we sometimes find this law interfered with. Thus, roughened iron, especially if painted over or blackened, becomes dewed sooner than varnished paper: the kind of *surface*, therefore, has a great influence. Expose, then, the *same* material in very diversified states as to surface" (that is, employ the Method of Difference to ascertain concomitance of variations), "and another scale of intensity becomes at once apparent; those

surfaces which *part with their heat* most readily by radiation, are found to contract dew most copiously." . . .

'The conclusion obtained by this new application of the method is, that *cæteris paribus* the deposition of dew is also in some proportion to the power of radiating heat; and that the quality of doing this abundantly (or some cause on which that quality depends) is another of the causes which promote the deposition of dew on the substance.

'"Again, the influence ascertained to exist of *substance* and *surface* leads us to consider that of *texture;* and here, again, we are presented on trial with remarkable differences, and with a third scale of intensity, pointing out substances of a close firm texture, such as stones, metals, etc., as unfavourable, but those of a loose one, as cloth, velvet, wool, eiderdown, cotton, etc., as eminently favourable to the contraction of dew." The Method of Concomitant Variations is here, for the third time, had recourse to; and, as before, from necessity, since the texture of no substance is absolutely firm or absolutely loose. Looseness of texture, therefore, or something which is the cause of that quality, is another circumstance which promotes the deposition of dew; but this third cause resolves itself into the first, viz. the quality of resisting the passage of heat: for substances of loose texture "are precisely those which are best adapted for clothing, or for impeding the free passage of heat from the skin into the air, so as to allow their outer surfaces to be very cold, while they remain warm within." . . .

'It thus appears that the instances in which much dew is deposited, which are very various, agree in this, and, so far as we are able to observe, in this only, that they either radiate heat rapidly or conduct it slowly: qualities between which there is no other circumstance of agreement than that by virtue of either, the body tends to lose heat from the surface more rapidly than it can be restored from within. The instances, on the contrary, in which no dew, or but a small quantity of it, is formed, and which are also extremely various, agree (so far as we can observe) in nothing except in *not* having this same property. . . .

'This doubt we are now able to resolve. We have found that, in every such instance, the substance must be one which, by its own properties or laws, would, if exposed in the night, become colder than the surrounding air. The coldness, therefore, being accounted for independently of the dew, while it is proved that there is a connection between the two, it must be the dew which depends on the coldness; or, in other words, the coldness is the cause of the dew.

'This law of causation, already so amply established, admits, however, of efficient additional corroboration in no less than three ways. First, by deduction from the known laws of aqueous vapour when diffused through air or any other gas; and though we have not yet come to the Deductive Method, we will not omit what is necessary to render this speculation complete. It is known by direct experiment that only a limited quantity of water can remain suspended in the state of vapour at each degree of temperature, and that this maximum grows less and less as the temperature diminishes. From this it follows deductively, that if there is already as much vapour suspended as the air will contain at its existing temperature, any lowering of that temperature will cause a portion of the vapour to be condensed, and become water. But, again, we know deductively, from the laws of heat, that the contact of the air with a body colder than itself, will necessarily lower the temperature of the stratum of air immediately applied to its surface; and will therefore cause it to part with a portion of its water, which accordingly will, by the ordinary laws of gravitation or cohesion, attach itself to the surface of the body, thereby constituting dew. This deductive proof, it will have

been seen, has the advantage of proving at once causation as well as co-existence; and it has the additional advantage that it also accounts for the *exceptions* to the occurrence of the phenomenon, the cases in which, although the body is colder than the air, yet no dew is deposited, by showing that this will necessarily be the case when the air is so under-supplied with aqueous vapour, comparatively to its temperature, that even when somewhat cooled by the contact of the colder body, it can still continue to hold in suspension all the vapour which was previously suspended in it: thus in a very dry summer there are no dews, in a very dry winter no hoar frost. . . .

'The second corroboration of the theory is by direct experiment, according to the canon of the Method of Difference. We can, by cooling the surface of any body, find in all cases some temperature (more or less inferior to that of the surrounding air, according to its hygrometric condition) at which dew will begin to be deposited. Here, too, therefore, the causation is directly proved. We can, it is true, accomplish this only on a small scale; but we have ample reason to conclude that the same operation, if conducted in Nature's great laboratory, would equally produce the effect.

'And, finally, even on that great scale we are able to verify the result. The case is one of those rare cases, as we have shown them to be, in which nature works the experiment for us in the same manner in which we ourselves perform it; introducing into the previous state of things a single and perfectly definite new circumstance, and manifesting the effect so rapidly that there is not time for any other material change in the pre-existing circumstances. "It is observed that dew is never copiously deposited in situations much screened from the open sky, and not at all in a cloudy night; but *if the clouds withdraw even for a few minutes, and leave a clear opening, a deposition of dew presently begins*, and goes on increasing. . . . Dew formed in clear intervals will often even evaporate again when the sky becomes thickly overcast." The proof, therefore, is complete, that the presence or absence of an uninterrupted communication with the sky causes the deposition or non-deposition of dew. Now, since a clear sky is nothing but the absence of clouds, and it is a known property of clouds, as of all other bodies between which and any given object nothing intervenes but an elastic fluid, that they tend to raise or keep up the superficial temperature of the object by radiating heat to it, we see at once that the disappearance of clouds will cause the surface to cool; so that Nature in this case produces a change in the antecedent by definite and known means, and the consequent follows accordingly: a natural experiment which satisfies the requisitions of the Method of Difference.'

IX.

These four are not all the scientific methods, but they lead up to the rest. They are all linked together, and no one has shown their connection better than Mill. In many cases these processes of isolation are powerless; namely, in those in which the effect, being produced by a concourse of causes, cannot be reduced into its elements. Methods of isolation are then impracticable. We cannot eliminate, and consequently we cannot perform induction. This serious difficulty presents itself in almost all cases of motion, for almost every movement is the effect of a concurrence of forces; and the respective effects of the various forces are found so mixed up in it that we cannot separate them without destroying it, so that it seems impossible to tell what part each

force has in the production of this movement. Take a body acted upon by two forces whose directions form an angle: it moves along the diagonal; each part, each moment, each position, each element of its movement, is the combined effect of the two impelling forces. The two effects are so commingled, that we cannot isolate either of them and refer it to its source. In order to perceive each effect separately, we should have to consider the movements apart, that is, to suppress the actual movement, and to replace it by others. Neither the Method of Agreement, nor of Difference, nor of Residues, nor of Concomitant Variations, which are all decomposing and eliminative, can avail against a phenomenon which by its nature excludes all elimination and decomposition. We must therefore evade the obstacle; and it is here that the last key of nature appears, the Method of Deduction. We quit the study of the actual phenomenon, we pass beside it, we observe other and simpler cases; we establish their laws, and we connect each to its cause by the ordinary methods of induction. Then, assuming the concurrence of two or of several of these causes, we conclude from their known laws what will be their total effect. We next satisfy ourselves as to whether the actual movement exactly coincides with the movement foretold; and if this is so, we attribute it to the causes from which we have deduced it. Thus, in order to discover the causes of the planetary motions, we seek by simple induction the laws of two causes: first, the force of primitive impulsion in the direction of the tangent; next, an accelerative attracting force. From these inductive laws we deduce by calculation the motion of a body submitted to their combined influence; and satisfying ourselves that the planetary motions observed coincide exactly with the predicted movements, we conclude that the two forces in question are actually the causes of the planetary motions. 'To the Deductive Method,' says Mill, 'the human mind is indebted for its most conspicuous triumphs in the investigation of nature. To it we owe all the theories by which vast and complicated phenomena are embraced under a few simple laws.' Our deviations have led us further than the direct path; we have derived efficiency from imperfection.

X.

If we now compare the two methods, their aptness, function, and provinces, we shall find, as in an abstract, the history, divisions, hopes, and limits of human science. The first appears at the beginning, the second at the end. The first necessarily gained ascendency in Bacon's time,[1] and now begins to lose it; the second necessarily lost ascendency in Bacon's time, and now begins to regain it. So that science, after having passed from the deductive to the experimental state, is now passing from the experimental to the deductive. Induction has for its province phenomena which are capable of being decomposed, and on which we can experiment. Deduction has for its province indecom-

[1] Mill's *Logic*, i. 526.

posable phenomena, or such on which we cannot experiment. The first is efficacious in physics, chemistry, zoology, and botany, in the earlier stages of every science, and also whenever phenomena are but slightly complicated, within our reach, capable of being modified by means at our disposal. The second is efficacious in astronomy, in the higher branches of physics, in physiology, history, in the higher grades of every science, whenever phenomena are very complicated, as in animal and social life, or lie beyond our reach, as the motions of the heavenly bodies and the changes of the atmosphere. When the proper method is not employed, science is at a stand-still: when it is employed, science progresses. Here lies the whole secret of its past and its present. If the physical sciences remained stationary till the time of Bacon, it was because men used deduction when they should have used induction. If physiology and the moral sciences are now making slow progress, it is because we employ induction when deduction should be used. It is by deduction, and according to physical and chemical laws, that we shall be enabled to explain physiological phenomena. It is by deduction, and according to mental laws, that we shall be enabled to explain historical phenomena.[1] And that which has become the instrument of these two sciences, it is the object of all the others to employ. All tend to become deductive, and aim at being summed up in certain general propositions, from which the rest may be deduced. The less numerous these propositions are, the more science advances. The fewer suppositions and postulates a science requires, the more perfect it has become. Such a reduction is its final condition. Astronomy, acoustics, optics, present us models. We shall know nature when we shall have deduced her millions of facts from two or three laws. I venture to say that the theory which you have just heard is perfect. I have omitted several of its characteristics, but you have seen enough to recognise that induction has nowhere been explained in so complete and precise a manner, with such an abundance of fine and just distinctions, with such extensive and exact applications, with such a knowledge of effectual practice and acquired discoveries, with so complete an exclusion of metaphysical principles and arbitrary suppositions, and in a spirit more in conformity with the rigorous procedure of modern experimental science. You asked me just now what Englishmen have effected in philosophy; I answer, the theory of Induction. Mill is the last of that great line of philosophers, which begins at Bacon, and which, through Hobbes, Newton, Locke, Hume, Herschell, is continued down to our own times. They have carried our national spirit into philosophy; they have been positive and practical; they have not soared above facts; they have not attempted out-of-the-way paths; they have

[1] See chapter 9, book vi. v. 2, 478, on *The Physical or Concrete Deductive Method as applied to Sociology*; and chapter 13, book iii., for explanations, after Liebig, of *Decomposition, Respiration, the Action of Poisons, etc.* A whole book is devoted to the logic of the moral sciences; I know no better treatise on the subject,

cleared the human mind of its illusions, presumptions, and fancies. They have employed it in the only direction in which it can act; they only wished to mark out and lit up the already well-trodden ways of the progressive sciences. They have not been willing to spend their labour vainly in other than explored and verified paths; they have aided in the great modern work, the discovery of applicable laws; they have contributed, as men of special attainments do, to the increase of man's power. Can you find many philosophers who have done as much?

XI.

You will tell me that our philosopher has clipped his wings in order to strengthen his legs. Certainly; and he has acted wisely. Experience limits the career which it opens to us; it has given us our goal, but also our boundaries. We have only to observe the elements of which our experience is composed, and the facts from which it sets out, to understand that its range is limited. Its nature and its method confine its progress to a few steps. And, in the first place,[1] the ultimate laws of nature cannot be less numerous than the several distinct species of our sensations. We can easily reduce a movement to another movement, but not the sensation of heat to that of smell, or of colour, or of sound, nor either of these to a movement. We can easily connect together phenomena of different degrees, but not phenomena differing in species. We find distinct sensations at the bottom of all our knowledge, as simple indecomposable elements, separated absolutely one from another, absolutely incapable of being reduced one to another. Let experience do what she will, she cannot suppress these diversities which constitute her foundation. On the other hand, experience, do what she will, cannot escape from the conditions under which she acts. Whatever be her province, it is bounded by time and space; the fact which she observes, is limited and influenced by an infinite number of other facts to which she cannot attain. She is obliged to suppose or recognise some primordial condition from whence she starts, and which she does not explain.[2] Every problem has its accidental or arbitrary data: we deduce the rest from these, but there is nothing from which these can be deduced. The sun, the earth, the planets, the initial impulse of the heavenly bodies, the primitive chemical properties of substances,

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[1] Mill's *Logic*, ii. 4.

[2] 'There exists in nature a number of Permanent Causes, which have subsisted ever since the human race has been in existence, and for an indefinite and probably an enormous length of time previous. The sun, the earth, and planets, with their various constituents, air, water, and the other distinguishable substances, whether simple or compound, of which nature is made up, are such Permanent Causes. They have existed, and the effects or consequences which they were fitted to produce have taken place (as often as the other conditions of the production met), from the very beginning of our experience. But we can give no account of the origin of the Permanent Causes themselves.'—MILL'S *Logic*, i. 378.

are such data.[1] If we possessed them all, we could explain everything by them, but we could not explain these themselves. Mill says:

'Why these particular natural agents existed originally and no others, or why they are commingled in such and such proportions, and distributed in such and such a manner throughout space, is a question we cannot answer. More than this: we can discover nothing regular in the distribution itself; we can reduce it to no uniformity, to no law. There are no means by which, from the distribution of these causes or agents in one part of space, we could conjecture whether a similar distribution prevails in another.'[2]

And astronomy, which, just now, afforded us the model of a perfect science, now affords us an example of a limited science. We can predict the numberless positions of all the planetary bodies; but we are obliged to assume, beside the primitive impulse and its amount, not only the force of attraction and its law, but also the masses and distances of all the bodies in question. We understand millions of facts, but it is by means of a hundred facts which we do not comprehend; we arrive at necessary results, but it is only by means of accidental antecedents; so that, if the theory of our universe were completed, there would still remain two great voids: one at the commencement of the physical world, the other at the beginning of the moral world; the one comprising the elements of being, the other embracing the elements of experience; one containing primary sensations, the other primitive agents. 'Our knowledge,' says Royer-Collard, 'consists in tracing ignorance as far back as possible.'

Can we at least affirm that these irreducible data are so only in appearance, and in comparison with our mind? Can we say that they have causes, like the derived facts of which they are the causes? Can we conclude that every event, always and everywhere, happens according to laws, and that this little world of ours, so well regulated, is a sort of epitome of the universe? Can we, by the aid of axioms, quit our narrow confines, and affirm anything of the universe? In no wise;

[1] 'The resolution of the laws of the heavenly motions established the previously unknown ultimate property of a mutual attraction between all bodies: the resolution, so far as it has yet proceeded, of the laws of crystallization, or chemical composition, electricity, magnetism, etc., points to various polarities, ultimately inherent in the particles of which bodies are composed; the comparative atomic weights of different kinds of bodies were ascertained by resolving, into more general laws, the uniformities observed in the proportions in which substances combine with one another; and so forth. Thus, although every resolution of a complex uniformity into simpler and more elementary laws has an apparent tendency to diminish the number of the ultimate properties, and really does remove many properties from the list; yet, (since the result of this simplifying process is to trace up an ever greater variety of different effects to the same agents), the further we advance in this direction, the greater number of distinct properties we are forced to recognise in one and the same object; the co-existences of which properties must accordingly be ranked among the ultimate generalities of nature.'—MILL'S *Logic*, ii. 108.

[2] *Ibid.* i. 378.

and it is here that Mill pushes his principles to its furthest consequences: for the law which attributes a cause to every event, has to him no other foundation, worth, or scope, than what it derives from experience. It has no inherent necessity; it draws its whole authority from the great number of cases in which we have recognised it to be true; it only sums up a mass of observations; it unites two data, which, considered in themselves, have no intimate connection; it joins antecedents generally to consequents generally, just as the law of gravitation joins a particular antecedent to a particular consequent; it determines a couple, as do all experimental laws, and shares in their uncertainty and in their restrictions. Listen to this bold assertion:

'I am convinced that any one accustomed to abstraction and analysis, who will fairly exert his faculties for the purpose, will, when his imagination has once learnt to entertain the notion, find no difficulty in conceiving that in some one, for instance, of the many firmaments into which sidereal astronomy now divides the universe, events may succeed one another at random, without any fixed law; nor can anything in our experience, or in our mental nature, constitute a sufficient, or indeed any, reason for believing that this is nowhere the case. The grounds, therefore, which warrant us in rejecting such a supposition with respect to any of the phenomena of which we have experience, must be sought elsewhere than in any supposed necessity of our intellectual faculties.'[1]

Practically, we may trust in so well-established a law; but

'In distant parts of the stellar regions, where the phenomena may be entirely unlike those with which we are acquainted, it would be folly to affirm confidently that this general law prevails, any more than those special ones which we have found to hold universally on our own planet. The uniformity in the succession of events, otherwise called the law of causation, must be received not as a law of the universe, but of that portion of it only which is within the range of our means of sure observation, with a reasonable degree of extension to adjacent cases. To extend it further is to make a supposition without evidence, and to which, in the absence of any ground from experience for estimating its degree of probability, it would be idle to attempt to assign any.'[2]

We are, then, irrevocably driven back from the infinite; our faculties and our assertions cannot attain to it; we remain confined in a small circle; our mind reaches not beyond its experience; we can establish no universal and necessary connection between facts; such a connection probably does not even exist. Mill stops here; but certainly, by carrying out his idea to its full extent, we should arrive at the conception of the world as a mere collection of facts; no internal necessity would induce their connection or their existence; they would be simple arbitrary, accidentally-existing facts. Sometimes, as in our system, they would be found assembled in such a manner as to give rise to regular recurrences; sometimes they would be so assembled that nothing of the sort would occur. Chance, as Democritus taught, would be at the foundation of all things. Laws would be the result of chance, and sometimes we should find them, sometimes not. It would be with

[1] Mill's *Logic*, ii. 95. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 104.

existences as with numbers—decimal fractions, for instance, which, according to the chance of their two primitive factors, sometimes recur regularly, and sometimes not. This is certainly an original and lofty conception. It is the final consequence of the primitive and dominant idea, which we have discovered at the beginning of the system, which has transformed the theories of Definition, of Propositions, and of the Syllogism; which has reduced axioms to experimental truths; which has developed and perfected the theory of induction; which has established the goal, the limits, the province, and the methods of science; which everywhere, in nature and in science, has suppressed interior connections; which has replaced the necessary by the accidental; cause by antecedent; and which consists in affirming that every assertion which is not merely verbal forms in effect a couple, that is to say, joins together two facts which were separate by their nature.

§ 2.—Abstraction.

I.

An abyss of chance and an abyss of ignorance. The prospect is gloomy: no matter, if it be true. At all events, this theory of science is a theory of English science. Rarely, I grant you, has a thinker better summed up in his teaching the practice of his country; seldom has a man better represented by his negations and his discoveries the limits and scope of his race. The operations, of which he composes science, are those in which you excel all others, and those which he excludes from science are the ones in which you are deficient more than any other nation. He has described the English mind whilst he thought to describe the human mind. That is his glory, but it is also his weakness. There is in your idea of knowledge a flaw of which the incessant repetition ends by creating the gulf of chance, from which, according to him, all things arise, and the gulf of ignorance, at whose brink, according to him, our knowledge ends. And see what comes of it. By cutting away from science the knowledge of first causes, that is, of divine things, you reduce men to become sceptical, positive, utilitarian, if they are cool-headed; or mystical, enthusiastic, methodistical, if they have lively imaginations. In this huge unknown void which you place beyond our little world, hot-headed men and uneasy consciences find room for all their dreams; and men of cold judgment, despairing of arriving at any certain knowledge, have nothing left but to sink down to the search for practical means which may serve for the amelioration of our condition. It seems to me, that these two dispositions are most frequently met with in an English mind. The religious and the positive spirit dwell there side by side, but separate. This produces an odd medley, and I confess that I prefer the way in which the Germans have reconciled science with faith.—But their philosophy is but badly written poetry.—Perhaps so.—But what they call reason, or intuition of principles, is only the

faculty of building up hypotheses.—Perhaps so.—But the systems which they have constructed have not held their ground before experience.—I do not defend what they have done.—But their absolute, their subject, their object, and the rest, are but big words.—I do not defend their style.—What, then, do you defend?—Their idea of Causation.—You believe with them that causes are discovered by a revelation of the reason!—By no means.—You believe with us that our knowledge of causes is based on simple experience?—Still less.—You think, then, that there is a faculty, other than experience and reason, capable of discovering causes?—Yes.—You think there is an intermediate course between illumination and observation, capable of arriving at principles, as it is affirmed that the first is, capable of arriving at truths, as we find that the second is?—Yes.—What is it?—Abstraction. Let us return to your original idea; I will endeavour to show in what I think it incomplete, and how you seem to me to mutilate the human mind. But you must give me space; it will be a regular argument of an advocate.

II.

Your starting-point is good: man, in fact, does not know anything of substances; he knows neither minds nor bodies; he perceives only transient, isolated, internal conditions; he makes use of these to affirm and name exterior states, positions, movements, changes, and avails himself of them for nothing else. He can only attain to facts, whether within or without, sometimes transient, when his impression is not repeated; sometimes permanent, when his impression many times repeated, makes him suppose that it will be repeated, as often as he wishes to experience it. He only grasps colours, sounds, resistances, movements, sometimes momentary and variable, sometimes like one another, and renewed. To group these facts more advantageously, he supposes, by an artifice of language, qualities and properties. We go even further than you: we think that there are neither minds nor bodies, but simply groups of present or possible movements or thoughts. We believe that there are no substances, but only systems of facts. We regard the idea of substance as a psychological illusion. We consider substance, force, and all the modern metaphysical existences, as the remains of scholastic entities. We think that there exists nothing but facts and laws, that is, events and the relations between them; and we recognise, with you, that all knowledge consists first of all in connecting or adding fact to fact. But when this is done, a new operation begins, the most fertile of all, which consists in reducing these complex into simple facts. A splendid faculty appears, the source of language, the interpreter of nature, the parent of religions and philosophies, the only genuine distinction, which, according to its degree, separates man from the brute, and great from little men. I mean Abstraction, which is the power of isolating the elements of facts, and of considering them one by one. My eyes follow the outline of a square,

and abstraction isolates its two constituent properties, the equality of its sides and angles. My fingers touch the surface of a cylinder, and abstraction isolates its two generative elements, the idea of a rectangle, and of the revolution of this rectangle about one of its sides as an axis. A hundred thousand experiments develop for me, by an infinite number of details, the series of physiological operations which constitute life; and abstraction derives the law of this series, which is a round of constant loss and continual reparation. Twelve hundred pages teach me Mill's opinion on the various facts of science, and abstraction isolates his fundamental idea, namely, that the only fertile propositions are those which connect a fact to another not contained in the first. Everywhere the case is the same. A fact, or a series of facts, can always be resolved into its components. It is this resolution which forms our problem, when we ask what is the nature of an object. It is these components we look for when we wish to penetrate into the inner nature of a being. These we designate under the names of forces, causes, laws, essences, primitive properties. They are not new facts added to the first, but a portion or extract from them; they are contained in the first, they have no existence apart from the facts themselves. When we discover them, we do not pass from one fact to another, but from one to another aspect of the same fact; from the whole to a part, from the compound to the components. We only see the same thing under two forms; first, as a whole, then as divided: we only translate the same idea from one language into another, from the language of the senses into abstract language, just as we express a curve by an equation, or a cube as a function of its side. It signifies little whether this translation be difficult or not; or that we generally need the accumulation or comparison of a vast number of facts to arrive at it, and whether our mind may not often succumb before accomplishing it. However this may be, in this operation, which is evidently fertile, instead of proceeding from one fact to another, we go from the same to the same; instead of adding experiment to experiment, we set aside some portion of the first; instead of advancing, we pause to examine the ground we stand on. There are, thus, instructive judgments, which, however, are not the results of experience: there are essential propositions, which, however, are not merely verbal: there is, thus, an operation, differing from experience, which acts by cutting down instead of by addition; which, instead of acquiring, devotes itself to acquired data; and which, going farther than observation, opening a new field to the sciences, defines their nature, determines their progress, completes their resources, and marks out their end.

This is the great omission of your system. Abstraction is left in the background, barely mentioned, concealed by the other operations of the mind, treated as an appendage of Experience; we have but to re-establish it in the general theory, in order to reform the particular theories in which it is absent.

III.

To begin with Definitions. Mill teaches that there is no definition of things, and that when you define a sphere as the solid generated by the revolution of a semi-circle about its diameter, you only define a name. Doubtless you tell me by this the meaning of a name, but you also teach me a good deal more. You state that all the properties of every sphere are derived from this generating formula; you reduce an infinitely complex system of facts to two elements; you transform sensible into abstract data; you express the essence of the sphere, that is to say, the inner and primordial cause of all its properties. Such is the nature of every true definition; it is not content with explaining a name, it is not a mere description; it does not simply indicate a distinctive property; it does not limit itself to ticketing an object which will cause it to be distinguished from all others. There are, besides its definition, several other ways of causing the object to be recognised; there are other properties belonging to it exclusively: we might describe a sphere by saying that, of all bodies having an equal surface, it occupies the most space; or in many other ways. But such descriptions are not definitions; they lay down a characteristic and derived property, not a generating and primitive one; they do not reduce the thing to its factors, and reconstruct it before our eyes; they do not show its inner nature and its irreducible elements. A definition is a proposition which marks in an object that quality from which its others are derived, but which is not derived from others. Such a proposition is not verbal, for it teaches the quality of a thing. It is not the affirmation of an ordinary quality, for it reveals to us the quality which is the source of the rest. It is an assertion of an extraordinary kind, the most fertile and valuable of all, which sums up a whole science, and in which it is the aim of every science to be summed up. There is a definition in every science, and one for each object. We do not in every case possess it, but we search for it everywhere. We have arrived at defining the planetary motion by the tangential force and attraction which compose it; we can already partially define a chemical body by the notion of equivalent, and a living body by the notion of type. We are striving to transform every group of phenomena into certain laws, forces, or abstract notions. We endeavour to attain in every object to the generating elements, as we do attain them in the sphere, the cylinder, the circle, the cone, and in all mathematical loci. We reduce natural bodies to two or three kinds of movement—attraction, vibration, polarisation—as we reduce geometrical bodies to two or three kinds of elements—the point, the movement, the line; and we consider our science partial or complete, provisional or definite, according as this reduction is approximate or absolute, imperfect or complete.

IV.

The same alteration is required in the Theory of Proof. According to Mill, we do not prove that Prince Albert will die by premising that all men are mortal, for that would be asserting the same thing twice over; but from the facts that John, Peter, and others, in short, all men of whom we have ever heard, have died.—I reply that the real source of our inference lies neither in the mortality of John, Peter, and company, nor in the mortality of all men, but elsewhere. We prove a fact, says Aristotle,[1] by showing its cause. We shall therefore prove the mortality of Prince Albert by showing the cause which produces his death. And why will he die? Because the human body, being an unstable chemical compound, must in time be resolved: in other words, because mortality is added to the quality of man. Here is the cause and the proof. It is this abstract law which, present in nature, will cause the death of the prince, and which, being present to my mind, shows me that he will die. It is this abstract proposition which is demonstrative; it is neither the particular nor the general propositions. In fact, the abstract proposition proves the others. If John, Peter, and others are dead, it is because mortality is added to the quality of man. If all men are dead, or will die, it is still because mortality is added to the quality of man. Here, again, the part played by Abstraction has been overlooked. Mill has confounded it with Experience: he has not distinguished the proof from the materials of the proof, the abstract law from the finite or indefinite number of its applications. The applications contain the law and the proof, but are themselves neither law nor proof. The examples of Peter, John, and others, contain the cause, but they are not the cause. It is not sufficient to add up the cases, we must extract from them the law. It is not enough to experimentalise, we must abstract. This is the great scientific operation. Syllogism does not proceed from the particular to the particular, as Mill says, nor from the general to the particular, as the ordinary logicians teach, but from the abstract to the concrete: that is to say, from cause to effect. It is on this ground that it forms part of science, the links of which it makes and marks out; it connects principles with effects; it brings together definitions and phenomena. It diffuses through the whole range of science that Abstraction which definition has carried to its summit.

V.

Abstraction explains also axioms. According to Mill, if we know that when equal magnitudes are added to equal magnitudes the wholes are equal, or that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, it is by

[1] See the Posterior Analytics, which are much superior to the Prior—*διʼ αἰτίων καὶ πρώτων*.

external ocular experiment, or by an internal experiment by the aid of imagination. Doubtless we may thus arrive at the conclusion that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, but we might recognise it also in another manner. We might represent a straight line in imagination, and we may also form a conception of it by reason. We may either study its form or its definition. We can observe it in itself, or in its generating elements. I can represent to myself a line ready drawn, but I can also resolve it into its elements. I can go back to its formation, and discover the abstract elements which produce it, as I have watched the formation of the cylinder and discover the revolution of the rectangle which generated it. It will not do to say that a straight line is the shortest from one point to another, for that is a derived property; but I may say that it is the line described by a point, tending to approach towards another point, and towards that point only: which amounts to saying that two points suffice to determine a straight line; in other words, that two straight lines, having two points in common, coincide in their entire length; from which we see that if two straight lines approach to enclose a space, they would form but one straight line, and enclose nothing at all. Here is a second method of arriving at a knowledge of the axiom, and it is clear that it differs much from the first. In the first we verify; in the second we deduce it. In the first we find by experience that it is true; in the second we prove it to be true. In the first we admit the truth; in the second we explain it. In the first we merely remark that the contrary of the axiom is inconceivable; in the second we discover in addition that the contrary of the axiom is contradictory. Having given the definition of the straight line, we find that the axiom that two straight lines cannot enclose a space is comprised in it, and may be derived from it, as a consequent from a principle. In fact, it is nothing more than an identical proposition, which means that the subject contains its attribute; it does not connect two separate terms, irreducible one to the other; it unites two terms, of which the second is a part of the first. It is a simple analysis, and so are all axioms. We have only to decompose them, in order to see that they do not proceed from one object to a different one, but are concerned with one object only. We have but to resolve the notions of equality, cause, substance, time, and space into their abstracts, in order to demonstrate the axioms of equality, substance, cause, time, and space. There is but one axiom, that of identity. The others are only its applications or its consequences. When this is admitted, we at once see that the range of our mind is altered. We are no longer merely capable of relative and limited knowledge, but also of absolute and infinite knowledge; we possess in axioms facts which not only accompany one another, but one of which includes the other. If, as Mill says, they merely accompanied one another, we should be obliged to conclude with him, that perhaps this might not always be the case. We should not see the inner necessity for their connection, and should only admit

it as far as our experience went; we should say that, the two facts being isolated in their nature, circumstances might arise in which they would be separate; we should affirm the truth of axioms only in reference to our world and mind. If, on the contrary, the two facts are such that the first contains the second, we should establish on this very ground the necessity of their connection; wheresoever the first may be found, it will carry the second with it, since the second is a part of it, and cannot be separated from it. No circumstance can exist between them and divide them, for they are but one thing under different aspects. Their connection is therefore absolute and universal; and we possess truths which admit neither doubt, nor limitation, nor condition, nor restriction. Abstraction restores to axioms their value, whilst it shows their origin; and we restore to science her dispossessed dominion, by restoring to the mind the faculty of which it had been deprived.

VI.

Induction remains to be considered, which seems to be the triumph of pure experience, while it is, in reality, the triumph of abstraction. When I discover by induction that cold produces dew, or that the passage from the liquid to the solid state produces crystallisation, I establish a connection between two abstract facts. Neither cold, nor dew, nor the passage from the liquid to the solid state, nor crystallisation, exist in themselves. They are parts of phenomena, extracts from complex cases, simple elements included in compound aggregates. I withdraw and isolate them; I isolate dew in general from all local, temporary, special dews which I observe; I isolate cold in general from all special, various distinct colds which may be produced by all varieties of texture, all diversities of substance, all inequalities of temperature, all complications of circumstances. I join an abstract antecedent to an abstract consequent, and I connect them, as Mill himself shows, by subtractions, suppressions, eliminations; I expel from the two groups, containing them, all the proximate circumstances; I discover the couple under the surroundings which obscure it; I detach, by a series of comparisons and experiments, all the subsidiary accidental circumstances which have clung to it, and thus I end by laying it bare. I seem to be considering twenty different cases, and in reality I only consider one; I appear to proceed by addition, and in fact I am performing subtraction. All the methods of Induction, therefore, are methods of Abstraction, and all the work of Induction is the connection of abstract facts.

VII.

We see now the two great moving powers of science, and the two great manifestations of nature. There are two operations, experience and abstraction; there are two kingdoms, that of complex facts, and that of simple elements. The first is the effect, the second the cause. The first is contained in the second, and is deduced from it, as a consequent

from its principle. Both are equivalent; they are one and the same thing considered under two aspects. This magnificent moving universe, this tumultuous chaos of mutually dependent events, this incessant life, infinitely varied and multiplied, may be all reduced to a few elements and their relations. Our whole efforts amount in passing from one to the other, from the complex to the simple, from facts to laws, from experiences to formulæ. And the reason of this is evident; for this fact which I perceive by the senses or the consciousness is but a fragment arbitrarily severed by my senses or my consciousness from the infinite and continuous woof of existence. If they were differently constituted, they would intercept other fragments; it is the chance of their structure which determines what is actually perceived. They are like open compasses, which might be more or less extended; and the area of the circle which they describe is not natural, but artificial. It is so in two ways, both externally and internally. For, when I consider an event, I isolate it artificially from its natural surroundings, and I compose it artificially of elements which do not form a natural group. When I see a falling stone, I separate the fall from the anterior circumstances which are really connected with it; and I put together the fall, the form, the structure, the colour, the sound, and twenty other circumstances which are really not connected with it. A fact, then, is an arbitrary aggregate, and at the same time an arbitrary severing;[1] that is to say, a factitious group, which separates things connected, and connects things that are separate. Thus, so long as we only regard nature by observation, we do not see it as it is: we have only a provisional and illusory idea of it. Nature is, in reality, a tapestry, of which we only see the reverse; this is why we try to turn it. We strive to discover laws; that is, the natural groups which are really distinct from their surroundings, and composed of elements really connected. We discover couples; that is to say, real compounds and real connections. We pass from the accidental to the necessary, from the relative to the absolute, from the appearance to the reality; and having found these first couples, we practise upon them the same operation as we did upon facts, for, though in a less degree, they are of the same nature. Though more abstract, they are still complex. They may be decomposed and explained. There is some ulterior reason for their existence. There is some cause or other which constructs and unites them. In their case, as well as for facts, we can search for generating elements into which they may be resolved, and from which they may be deduced. And this operation may be continued until we have arrived at elements wholly simple; that is to say, such that their decomposition would involve a contradiction. Whether we can find them or not, they exist; the axiom of causation would be falsified if

[1] An eminent student of physical science said to me: 'A fact is a superposition of laws.'

they were absent. There are, then, indecomposable elements, from which are derived more general laws; and from these, again, more special laws; and from these the facts which we observe; just as in geometry there are two or three primitive notions, from which are deduced the properties of lines, and from these the properties of surfaces, solids, and the numberless forms which nature can produce or the mind imagine. We can now comprehend the value and meaning of that axiom of causation which governs all things, and which Mill has mutilated. There is an inner constraining force which gives rise to every event, which unites every compound, which engenders every actual fact. This signifies, on the one hand, that there is a reason for everything; that every fact has its law; that every compound can be reduced to simple elements; that every product implies factors; that every quality and every being must be reducible from some superior and anterior term. And it signifies, on the other hand, that the product is equivalent to the factors, that both are but the same thing under different aspects; that the cause does not differ in nature from the effect; that the generating powers are but elementary properties; that the active force by which we represent Nature to our minds is but the logical necessity which mutually transforms the compound and the simple, the fact and the law. Thus we determine beforehand the limits of every science; and we possess the potent formula, which, establishing the invincible connection and the spontaneous production of existences, places in Nature the moving spring of Nature, whilst it drives home and fixes in the heart of every living thing the iron fangs of necessity.

VIII.

Can we arrive at a knowledge of these primary elements? For my part, I think we can; and the reason is, that, being abstractions, they are not beyond the region of facts, but are comprised in them, so that we have only to extract them from the facts. Besides, being the most abstract, that is, the most general of all things, there are no facts which do not comprise them, and from which we cannot extract them. However limited our experience may be, we can arrive at these primary notions; and it is from this observation that the modern German metaphysicians have started in attempting their vast constructions. They understood that there are simple motions, that is to say, indecomposable abstract facts, that the combinations of these engender all others, and that the laws for their mutual union or contrarieties, are the primary laws of the universe. They tried to attain to these ideas, and to evolve by pure reason the world as observation shows it to us. They have failed; and their gigantic edifice, factitious and fragile, hangs in ruins, reminding one of those temporary scaffoldings which only serve to mark out the plan of a future building. The reason is, that with a high notion of our powers, they had no exact view of their limits. For

we are outflanked on all sides by the infinity of time and space; we find ourselves thrown in the midst of this monstrous universe like a shell on the beach, or an ant at the foot of a steep slope. Here Mill is right. Chance is at the end of all our knowledge, as on the threshold of all our postulates: we vainly try to rise, and that by conjecture, to an initial state; but this state depends on the preceding one, which depends on another, and so on; and thus we are forced to accept it as a pure postulate, and to give up the hope of deducing it, though we know that it ought to be deduced. It is so in all sciences, in geology, natural history, physics, chemistry, psychology, history; and the primitive accidental fact extends its effects into all parts of the sphere in which it is comprised. If it had been otherwise, we should have neither the same planets, nor the same chemical compounds, nor the same vegetables, nor the same animals, nor the same races of men, nor, perhaps, any of these kinds of beings. If an ant were taken into another country, it would see neither the same trees, nor insects, nor dispositions of the soil, nor changes of the atmosphere, nor perhaps any of these forms of existence. There is, then, in every fact and in every object, an accidental and local part, a vast portion, which, like the rest, depends on primitive laws, but not directly, only through an infinite circuit of consequences, in such a way that between it and the primitive laws there is an infinite hiatus, which can only be bridged over by an infinite series of deductions.

Such is the inexplicable part of phenomena, and this is what the German metaphysicians tried to explain. They wished to deduce from their elementary theorems the form of the planetary system, the various laws of physics and chemistry, the main types of life, the progress of human civilisations and thought. They contorted their universal formulæ with the view of deriving from them particular cases; they took indirect and remote consequences as direct and proximate ones; they omitted or suppressed the great work which is interposed between the first laws and the final consequences; they discarded Chance from their construction, as a basis unworthy of science; and the void so left, all but filled up by deceptive materials, caused the whole edifice to fall to ruins.

Does this amount to saying, that in the facts with which this little corner of the universe furnishes us, everything is local? By no means. If an ant were capable of making experiments, it might attain to the idea of a physical law, a living form, a representative sensation, an abstract thought; for a foot of ground, on which there is a thinking brain, includes all these. Therefore, however limited be the field of the mind, it contains general facts; that is, facts spread over very vast external territories, into which its limitation prevents it from entering. If the ant were capable of reasoning, it might construct arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mechanics; for a movement of half an inch contains in abstract time, space, number, and force, all the materials of mathe-

matics: therefore, however limited the field of a mind's researches be, it includes universal data; that is, facts spread over the whole region of time and space. Again, if the ant were a philosopher, it might evolve the ideas of existence, of nothingness, and all the materials of metaphysics; for any phenomenon, interior or exterior, suffices to present these materials: therefore, however limited the field of a mind be, it contains absolute truths; that is, such that there is no object from which they could be absent. And this must necessarily be so; for the more general a fact is, the fewer objects need we examine to meet with it. If it is universal, we meet with it everywhere; if it is absolute, we cannot escape meeting it. This is why, in spite of the narrowness of our experience, metaphysics, I mean the search for first causes, is possible, but on condition that we remain at a great height, that we do not descend into details, that we consider only the most simple elements of existence, and the most general tendencies of nature. If any one were to collect the three or four great ideas in which our sciences result, and the three or four kinds of existence which make up our universe; if he were to compare those two strange quantities which we call duration and extension, those principal forms or determinations of quantity which we call physical laws, chemical types, and living species, and that marvellous representative power, the Mind, which, without falling into quantity, reproduces the other two and itself; if he discovered among these three terms—the pure quantity, the determined quantity, and the suppressed quantity[1]—such an order that the first must require the second, and the second the third; if he thus established that the pure quantity is the necessary commencement of Nature, and that Thought is the extreme term at which Nature is wholly suspended; it, again, isolating the elements of these data, he showed that they must be combined just as they are combined, and not otherwise: if he proved, moreover, that there are no other elements, and that there can be no other, he would have sketched out a system of metaphysics without encroaching on the positive sciences, and have attained the source without being obliged to descend to trace the various streams.

In my opinion, these two great operations, Experience as you have described it, and Abstraction, as I have tried to define it, comprise in themselves all the resources of the human mind, the one in its practical, the other in its speculative direction. The first leads us to consider nature as an assemblage of facts, the second as a system of laws: the exclusive employment of the first is English; that of the second, German. If there is a place between these two nations, it is ours. We have extended the English ideas in the eighteenth century; and now we can, in the nineteenth, add precision to German ideas. Our business is to restrain, to correct, to complete the two types of mind,

[1] Die aufgehobene Quantität.

one by the other, to combine them together, to express their ideas in a style generally understood, and thus to produce from them the universal mind.

IX.

We went out. As it ever happens in similar circumstances, each had caused the other to reflect, and neither had convinced the other. But our reflections were short: in the presence of a lovely August morning, all arguments fall to the ground. The old walls, the rain-worn stones, smiled in the rising sun. A fresh light rested on their embrasures, on the keystones of the cloisters, on the glossy ivy leaves. Roses and honeysuckles climbed the walls, and their flowers quivered and sparkled in the light breeze. The fountains murmured in the large lonely courts. The beautiful town stood out from the morning's mist, as adorned and tranquil as a fairy palace, and its robe of soft rosy vapour was indented, as an embroidery of the Renaissance, by a border of towers, cloisters, and palaces, each enclosed in verdure and decked with flowers. The architecture of all ages had mingled their ogives, trefoils, statues, and columns; time had softened their tints; the sun united them in its light, and the old city seemed a shrine to which every age and every genius had successively added a jewel. Beyond this, the river rolled its broad sheets of silver; the mowers stood up to the knee in the high grass of the meadows. Myriads of buttercups and meadow-sweet grasses, bending under the weight of their grey heads, plants sated with the dew of the night, swarmed in the rich soil. Words cannot express this freshness of tints, and their luxuriance of vegetation. The more the long line of shade receded, the more brilliant and full of life the flowers appeared. On seeing them, virgin and timid in their gilded veil, I thought of the blushing cheeks and modest eyes of a young girl who puts on for the first time her necklace of jewels. Around, as though to guard them, enormous trees, four centuries old, extended in regular lines; and I found in them a new trace of that practical good sense which has effected revolutions without committing ravages; which, while reforming in all directions, has destroyed nothing; which has preserved both its trees and its constitution, which has lopped off the dead branches without levelling the trunk; which alone, in our days, among all nations, is in the enjoyment not only of the present, but of the past.

CHAPTER VI.

Poetry.—Tennyson.

I. Talent and work—First attempts—Wherein he was opposed to preceding poets—Wherein he carried on their spirit.

II. First period—Female characters—Delicacy and refinement of sentiment and style—Variety of his emotions and of his subjects—Literary curiosity and poetic dilettantism—*The Dying Swan*—*The Lotos-Eaters.*

III. Second period—Popularity, good fortune, and life—Permanent sensibility and virgin freshness of the poetic temperament—Wherein he is at one with nature—*Locksley Hall*—Change of subject and style—Violent outbreak and personal feeling—*Maud.*

IV. Return of Tennyson to his first style—*In Memoriam*—Elegance, coldness, and lengthiness of this poem—The subject and the talent must harmonise—What subjects agree with the dilettante artist—*The Princess*—Comparison with *As You Like It*—Fanciful and picturesque world—How Tennyson repeats the dreams and the style of the Renaissance.

V. How Tennyson repeats the freshness and simplicity of the old epic—*The Idylls of the King*—Why he has restored the epic of the Round Table—Purity and elevation of his models and his poetry—*Elaine*—*Morte d'Arthur*—Want of individual and absorbing passion—Flexibility and disinterestedness of his mind—Talent for metamorphosis, embellishment, and refinement.

VI. His public—Society in England—Country comfort—Elegance—Education—Habits—Wherein Tennyson suits such a society—Society in France—Parisian life—Pleasures—Representation—Conversation—Boldness of mind—Wherein Alfred de Musset suits such a society—Comparison of the two societies and of the two poets.

I.

WHEN Tennyson published his first poems, the critics found fault with them. He held his peace; for ten years no one saw his name in a review, nor even in a publisher's catalogue. But when he appeared again before the public, his books had made their way alone and under the surface, and he passed at once for the greatest poet of his country and his time.

Men were surprised, and with a pleasing surprise. The potent generation of poets who had just died out, had passed like a whirlwind. Like their forerunners of the sixteenth century, they had carried away

and hurried everything to its extremes. Some had culled the gigantic legends, piled up dreams, ransacked the East, Greece, Arabia, the Middle Ages, and overloaded the human imagination with tones and fancies from every clime. Others had buried themselves in metaphysics and morality, had mused indefatigably on the human condition, and spent their lives in the sublime and the monotonous. Others, making a medley of crime and heroism, had conducted, through darkness and flashes of lightning, a train of contorted and terrible figures, desperate with remorse, relieved by their grandeur. Men wanted to rest after so many efforts and so much excess. Quitting the imaginative sentimental and Satanic school, Tennyson appeared exquisite. All the forms and ideas which had pleased them were found in him, but purified, modulated, set in a splendid style. He completed an age; he enjoyed that which had agitated others; his poetry was like the lovely evenings in summer: the outlines of the landscape are then the same as in the day-time; but the splendour of the dazzling dome is dulled; the re-invigorated flowers lift themselves up, and the calm sun, on the horizon, harmoniously blends in a network of crimson rays the woods and meadows which it just before burned by its brightness.

II.

What first attracted people were Tennyson's portraits of women. Adeline, Eleanore, Lilian, the May Queen, were keepsake characters, from the hand of a lover and an artist. The keepsake is gilt-edged, embossed with flowers and decorations, richly got up, soft, full of delicate figures, always elegant and always correct, which we might take to be sketched at random, and which are yet drawn carefully, on white vellum, slightly touched by their outline, all selected to rest and occupy the tender, white hands of a young bride or a girl. I have translated many ideas and many styles, but I shall not attempt to translate one of these portraits. Each word of them is like a tint, curiously deepened or shaded by the neighbouring tint, with all the boldness and success of the happiest refinement. The least alteration would obscure all. And there could not be too much of an art so just, so consummate, in painting the charming prettinesses, the sudden hauteurs, the half blushes, the imperceptible and fleeting caprices of feminine beauty. He opposes, harmonises them, makes them, as it were, into a gallery. Here is the frolicsome child, the little flirting fairy, who claps her tiny hands, who,

> 'So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
> From beneath her gather'd wimple
> Glancing with black-beaded eyes,
> Till the lightning laughters dimple
> The baby-roses in her cheeks;
> Then away she flies.'[1]

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Lilian*, 5.

Then the thoughtful fair, who thinks, with staring large blue eyes:

'Whence that aery bloom of thine,
Like a lily which the sun
Looks thro' in his sad decline,
And a rose-bush leans upon,
Thou that faintly smilest still,
As a Naiad in a well,
Looking at the set of day.'[1]

Anew 'the ever varying Madeline,' now smiling, then frowning, then joyful again, then angry, then uncertain between the two:

'Frowns perfect-sweet along the brow
Light-glooming over eyes divine,
Like little clouds sun-fringed.'[2]

The poet returned well pleased to all things, refined and exquisite. He caressed them so carefully, that his verses appeared at times far-fetched, affected, almost euphuistic. He gave them too much adornment and polishing; he seemed like an epicurean in style, as well as in beauty. He looked for pretty rustic scenes, touching remembrances, curious or pure sentiments. He made them into elegies, pastorals, and idyls. He wrote in every accent, and delighted in entering into the feelings of all ages. He wrote of St. Agnes, St. Simeon Stylites, Ulysses, Œnone, Sir Galahad, Lady Clare, Fatima, the Sleeping Beauty. He imitated alternately Homer and Chaucer, Theocritus and Spenser, the old English poets and the old Arabian poets. He gave life successively to the little real events of English life, and the great fantastic adventures of extinguished chivalry. He was like those musicians who use their bow in the service of all masters. He strayed through nature and history, with no preoccupation, without fierce passion, bent on feeling, relishing, culling from all parts, in the flower-stand of the drawing-room and in the rustic hedgerows, the rare or wild flowers whose scent or beauty could charm or amuse him. Men entered into his pleasure; smelt the graceful bouquets which he knew so well how to put together; preferred those which he took from the country; found that his talent was nowhere more easy. They admired the minute observation and refined sentiment which knew how to grasp and interpret the fleeting aspects. In the *Dying Swan* they forgot that the subject was almost threadbare, and the interest somewhat slight, that they might appreciate such verses as this:

'Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
And white against the cold-white sky,
Shone out their crowning snows.
One willow over the river wept,
And shook the wave as the wind did sigh;
Above in the wind was the swallow,

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Adeline*, 33. [2] *Ibid. Madeline*, 15.

Chasing itself at its own wild will,
And far thro' the marish green and still
The tangled water-courses slept,
Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.'[1]

But these melancholy pictures did not display him entirely; men accompanied him to the land of the sun, toward the soft voluptuousness of southern seas; they returned, with an involuntary fascination, to the verses in which he depicts the companions of Ulysses, who, slumbering in the land of the Lotos-eaters, happy dreamers like himself, forgot their country, and renounced action:

'A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse. . . .

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petal from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep. . . .

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil. . . .

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly),

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *The Dying Swan*, 45.

With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy.
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.'[1]

III.

Was this charming dreamer simply a dilettante? Men liked to consider him so; he seemed too happy to admit violent passions. Fame came to him easily and quickly, at the age of thirty. The Queen had justified the public favour by creating him Poet Laureate. A great writer had declared him a more genuine poet than Lord Byron, and maintained that nothing so perfect had been seen since Shakspeare. The student, at Oxford, put Tennyson's works between an annotated Euripides and a manual of scholastic philosophy. Young ladies found him amongst their marriage presents. He was called rich, venerated by his family, admired by his friends, amiable, without affectation, even unsophisticated. He lived in the country, chiefly in the Isle of Wight, amongst books and flowers, free from the annoyances, rivalries, and burdens of society, and his life was easily imagined to be a beautiful dream, as sweet as those which he had pictured.

Yet the men who looked closer saw that there was a fire of passion under this smooth surface. A genuine poetic temperament never fails him. He feels too acutely to be at peace. When we quiver at the least touch, we shake and tremble under great shocks. Already here and there, in his pictures of country and love, a brilliant verse broke with its glowing colour through the calm and correct outline. He had felt that strange growth of unknown powers which suddenly arrest a man with fixed gaze before revealed beauty. The specialty of the poet is to be ever young, for ever virgin. For us, the vulgar, things are threadbare; sixty centuries of civilisation have worn out their primitive freshness; we perceive them only through a veil of ready-made phrases; we employ them, we no longer comprehend them; we see in them no more magnificent flowers, but good vegetables; the luxuriant primeval forest is to us nothing but a well-planned, over-known, kitchen garden. On the other hand, the poet, in presence of this world, is as the first man on the first day. In a moment our phrases, our reasonings, all the trappings of memory and prejudice, vanish from his mind; things seem new to him; he is astonished and ravished; a headlong stream of sensations oppresses him; it is the all-potent

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851: *The Lotos-Eaters*, 140.

sap of human invention, which, checked in us, begins to flow in him. Fools call him mad, the truth being that he is a seer: for we may indeed be sluggish, but nature is always full of life; the rising sun is as beautiful as on the first dawn; the streaming floods, the multiplying flowers, the trembling passions, the forces which hurl onward the stormy whirlwind of existence, aspire and strive with the same energy as at their birth; the immortal heart of nature beats yet, heaving its coarse trappings, and its beatings work in the poet's heart when they no longer echo in our own. Tennyson felt this, not indeed always; but twice or thrice at least he has dared to make it heard. We have found the free action of full emotion, and recognised the voice of a man in these verses of *Locksley Hall:*

'Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong;"
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fulness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathise with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought:
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!'[1]

This is very frank and strong. *Maud* appeared still more so. In it the rapture broke forth with all its inequalities, familiarities, freedom, violence. The correct, measured poet gave himself up, seemed to think and weep aloud. This book is the secret diary of a gloomy young man, soured by great family misfortunes, by long solitary meditations, who gradually became enamoured, dared to speak, found himself loved. He does not sing, but speaks; they are the hazarded, reckless words of ordinary conversation; details of everyday life; the description of a toilet, a political dinner, a service and sermon in a village church. The prose of Dickens and Thackeray did not more firmly grasp real and actual manners. And by its side, most splendid poetry abounded and blossomed, as in fact it blossoms and abounds in the midst of our commonplaces. The smile of a richly dressed girl, a sunbeam on a stormy sea, or on a spray of roses, throws these sudden illuminations into impassioned souls. What verses are these, in which he represents himself in his dark little garden:

'A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore cannot I be
Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful season bland,
When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
Half lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the land?'[2]

What a holiday in his heart when he is loved! What madness in these cries, that intoxication, that tenderness which would pour itself on all, and summon all to the spectacle and the participation of his happiness! How all is transfigured in his eyes; and how constantly he is himself transfigured! Gaiety, then ecstasy, then childish fun, then satire, then outpourings, all ready movements, all sudden changes, like a crackling and flaming fire, renewing every moment its shape and colour: how rich is the soul, and how it can live a hundred years in a day! Surprised and insulted by the brother, he kills him in a duel, and loses her whom he loved. He flees; he is seen wandering in London. What a gloomy contrast is that of the great busy careless town, and a solitary man haunted by true grief! We follow him down the noisy streets, through the yellow fog, under the wan sun which rises above the river like a 'dull red ball,' and we hear the heart full of anguish, deep sobs, insensate agitation of a soul which would but cannot tear itself from its memories. Despair grows, and in the end the reverie becomes a vision:

'Dead, long dead,
Long dead!

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[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Locksley Hall*, 266.
[2] *Maud*, 1856, iv. 1, p. 15.

And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter.[1] . . .
O me! why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?
Maybe still I am but half-dead;
Then I cannot be wholly dumb;
I will cry to the steps above my head,
And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me
Deeper, ever so little deeper.'[2]

However, he revives, and gradually rises again. War breaks out, a liberal and generous war, the war against Russia; and the big, manly heart is healed by action and courage of the deep wound of love:

'And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd my breath
With a loyal people shouting a battle-cry. . . .
Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar;
And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one desire;
For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and done,
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.'[3]

This explosion of feeling was the only one; Tennyson has not again encountered it. In spite of the moral close, men said that he was imitating Byron; they cried out against these bitter declamations; they thought that they perceived the rebellious accent of the Satanic school; they blamed this uneven, obscure, excessive style; they were shocked at these crudities and incongruities; they called on the poet to return to his first well-proportioned style. He was discouraged, left the storm-clouds, and returned to the azure sky. He was right; he is there better than anywhere else. A fine soul may be transported, attain at times to the fire of the most violent and the strongest beings: personal memories, they say, had furnished the matter of *Maud* and of *Locksley Hall;* with a woman's delicacy, he had the nerves of a woman. The

[1] Tennyson's *Maud*, 1856, xxvii. 1, p. 99.
[2] *Ibid.* xxvii. 11, p. 105.
[3] *Ibid.* xxviii. 3 and 4, p. 108.

fit over, he fell again into his 'golden languors,' into his calm reverie. After *Locksley Hall* he had written the *Princess;* after *Maud* he wrote the *Idylls of the King.*

IV.

The great task of an artist is to find subjects which suit his talent. Tennyson has not always succeeded in this. His long poem, *In Memoriam*, written in praise and memory of a friend who died young, is cold, monotonous, and often too prettily arranged. He goes into mourning; but, like a correct gentleman, with bran new gloves, wipes away his tears with a cambric handkerchief, and displays throughout the religious service, which ends the ceremony, all the compunction of a respectful and well-trained layman. He was to find his subjects elsewhere. To be poetically happy is the object of a dilettante-artist. For this many things are necessary. First of all, that the place, the events, and the characters shall not exist. Realities are coarse, and always, in some sense, ugly; at least they are heavy: we do not treat them at our pleasure, they oppress the fancy; at bottom there is nothing truly sweet and beautiful in our life but our dreams. We are ill at ease whilst we remain glued to earth, hobbling along on our two feet, which drag us wretchedly here and there in the place which impounds us. We need to live in another world, to hover in the wide-air kingdom, to build palaces in the clouds, to see them rise and crumble, to follow in a hazy distance the whims of their moving architecture, and the turns of their golden volutes. In this fantastic world, again, all must be pleasant and beautiful, the heart and senses must enjoy it, objects must be smiling or picturesque, sentiments delicate or lofty; no crudity, incongruity, brutality, savageness must come to sully with its excess the modulated harmony of this ideal perfection. This leads the poet to the legends of chivalry. Here is the fantastic world, splendid to the sight, noble and specially pure, in which love, war, adventures, generosity, courtesy, all spectacles and all virtues which suit the instincts of our European races, are assembled, to furnish them with the epic which they love, and the model which suits them.

The *Princess* is a fairy tale as sentimental as those of Shakspeare. Tennyson here thought and felt like a young knight of the Renaissance. The mark of this kind of mind is a superabundance, as it were, a superfluity of sap. In the characters of the *Princess*, as in those of *As You Like It*, there is an over-fulness of fancy and emotions. They have recourse, to express their thought, to all ages and lands; they carry speech to the most reckless rashness; they clothe and burden every idea with a sparkling image, which drags and glitters upon it like a brocade clustered with jewels. Their nature is over-rich; at every shock there is in them a sort of rustle of joy, anger, desire; they live more than we, more warmly and more quickly. They are excessive, refined, ready to weep, laugh, adore, jest, inclined to mingle

adoration and jests, urged by a nervous rapture to contrasts, and even extremes. They sally in the poetic field with impetuous and changing caprice and joy. To satisfy the subtlety and superabundance of their originality, they need fairy-tales and masquerades. In fact, the *Princess* is both. The beautiful Ida, daughter of King Gama, who is monarch of the South (this country is not to be found on the map), was affianced in her childhood to a beautiful prince of the North. When the time appointed has arrived, she is claimed. She, proud and bred on learned arguments, has become irritated against the rule of men, and in order to liberate women has founded a university on the frontiers, which is to raise her sex, and to be the colony of future equality. The prince sets out with Cyril and Florian, two friends, obtains permission from good King Gama, and, disguised as a girl, enters the maiden precincts, where no man may enter in on pain of death. There is a charming and rallying grace in this picture of a university for girls. The poet sports with beauty; no badinage could be more romantic or tender. We smile to hear long learned words come from these rosy lips:

> 'There sat along the forms, like morning doves
> That sun their milky bosoms on the thatch,
> A patient range of pupils.'[1]

They listen to the historic dissertations and promises of the social revolution, in 'Academic silks, in hue the lilac, with a silken hood to each, and zoned with gold, . . . as rich as moth from dusk cocoons.' Amongst these girls was Melissa, a child—

> 'A rosy blonde, and in a college gown
> That clad her like an April daffodilly
> (Her mother's colour) with her lips apart,
> And all her thoughts as fair within her eyes,
> As bottom agates seem to wave and float
> In crystal currents of clear morning seas.'[2]

Be sure that the place assists in the magic. That plain title of College and Faculty recalls in Frenchmen only scant and dirty buildings, which we might mistake for barracks or furnished lodgings. Here, as in an English university, flowers creep up the porches, vines cling round the bases of the monuments, roses strew the alleys with their petals; the laurel thickets grow around the gates, the courts pile up their marble architecture, bossed with sculptured friezes, varied with urns from which droops the green pendage of the plants. 'The Muses and the Graces, group'd in threes, enring'd a billowing fountain in the midst.' After the lecture, some girls, in the deep meadow grass, 'smoothed a petted peacock down;' others,

> 'Leaning there on those balusters, high
> Above the empurpled champaign, drank the gale
> That blown about the foliage underneath,

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, 12th ed. 1864, ii. 34. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 46.

And sated with the innumerable rose
Beat balm upon our eyelids.'[1]

At every gesture, every attitude, we recognise young English girls; it is their brightness, their freshness, their innocence. And here and there, too, we perceive the deep expression of their large dreamy eyes:

'Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more. . . .

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.'[2]

This is an exquisite and strange voluptuousness, a reverie full of delight, and full, too, of anguish, the shudder of delicate and melancholy passion which we have already found in *Winter's Tale* or in *Twelfth Night*.

The three friends have gone forth with the princess and her train, all on horseback, and pause 'near a coppice-feather'd chasm,'

'till the Sun
Grew broader toward his death and fell, and all
The rosy heights came out above the lawns.'

Cyril, heated by wine, begins to troll a careless tavern-catch, and betrays the secret. Ida, indignant, turns to leave; her foot slips, and she falls into the river; the prince saves her, and wishes to flee. But he is seized by the Proctors and brought before the throne, where the haughty maiden stands ready to pronounce sentence. At this moment

'. . . There rose
A hubbub in the court of half the maids
Gather'd together: from the illumined hall
Long lanes of splendour slanted o'er a press
Of snowy shoulders, thick as herded ewes,
And rainbow robes, and gems and gemlike eyes,
And gold and golden heads; they to and fro
Fluctuated, as flowers in storm, some red, some pale,
All open-mouth'd, all gazing to the light,
Some crying there was an army in the land,
And some that men were in the very walls,
And some they cared not; till a clamour grew
As of a new-world Babel, woman-built,
And worse-confounded: high above them stood
The placid marble Muses, looking peace.'[3]

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, 12th ed. 1864, iii. 60.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 76. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 99.

The father of the prince has come with his army to deliver him, and has seized King Gama as a hostage. The princess is obliged to release the young man; she comes to him with distended nostrils, waving hair, a tempest raging in her heart, and thanks him with bitter irony. She trembles with wounded pride; she stammers, hesitates; she tries to constrain herself in order the better to insult him, and suddenly breaks out:

> ' " You have done well and like a gentleman,
> And like a prince: you have our thanks for all:
> And you look well too in your woman's dress:
> Well have you done and like a gentleman.
> You have saved our life: we owe you bitter thanks:
> Better have died and spilt our bones in the flood—
> Then men had said—but now—What hinders me
> To take such bloody vengeance on you both?—
> Yet since our father—Wasps in our good hive,
> You would-be quenchers of the light to be,
> Barbarians, grosser than your native bears—
> O would I had his sceptre for one hour!
> You that have dared to break our bound, and gull'd
> Our servants, wrong'd and lied and thwarted us—
> *I* wed with thee! *I* bound by precontract
> Your bride, your bondslave! not tho' all the gold
> That veins the world were pack'd to make your crown,
> And every spoken tongue should lord you. Sir,
> Your falsehood and yourself are hateful to us:
> I trample on your offers and on you:
> Begone: we will not look upon you more.
> Here, push them out at gates." '[1]

How is this fierce heart to be softened, fevered with feminine anger, embittered by disappointment and insult, excited by long dreams of power and ascendency, and rendered more savage by its virginity! But how anger becomes her, and how lovely she is! And how this fire of sentiment, this lofty declaration of independence, this chimerical ambition for reforming the future, reveal the generosity and pride of a young heart, enamoured of the beautiful! It is agreed that the quarrel shall be settled by a combat of fifty men against fifty other men. The prince is conquered, and Ida sees him bleeding on the sand. Slowly, gradually, in spite of herself, she yields, receives the wounded in her palace, and comes to the bedside of the dying prince. Before his weakness and his wild delirium pity expands, then tenderness, then love:

> ' From all a closer interest flourish'd up
> Tenderness touch by touch, and last, to these,
> Love, like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
> By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
> And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
> But such as gather'd colour day by day.' [2]

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, iv. 102.
[2] *Ibid.* v. 163.

One evening he returns to consciousness, exhausted, his eyes still troubled by gloomy visions; he sees Ida before him, hovering like a dream, painfully opens his pale lips, and 'utter'd whisperingly:'

> "If you be, what I think you, some sweet dream,
> I would but ask you to fulfil yourself:
> But if you be that Ida whom I knew,
> I ask you nothing: only, if a dream,
> Sweet dream, be perfect. I shall die to-night.
> Stoop down and seem to kiss me ere I die."
> . . . She turned; she paused;
> She stoop'd; and out of languor leapt a cry;
> Leapt fiery Passion from the brinks of death;
> And I believe that in the living world
> My spirit closed with Ida's at the lips;
> Till back I fell, and from mine arms she rose
> Glowing all over noble shame; and all
> Her falser self slipt from her like a robe,
> And left her woman, lovelier in her mood
> Than in her mould that other, when she came
> From barren deeps to conquer all with love;
> And down the streaming crystal dropt; and she
> Far-fleeted by the purple island-sides,
> Naked, a double light in air and wave.'[1]

This is the accent of the Renaissance, as it left the heart of Spenser and Shakspeare; they had this voluptuous adoration of form and soul, and this divine sentiment of beauty.

V.

There is another chivalry, which inaugurates the Middle Age, as this closes it; sung by children, as this by youths; and restored in the *Idylls of the King*, as this in the *Princess*. It is the legend of Arthur, Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table. With admirable art, Tennyson has renewed the feelings and the language; this pliant soul takes all tones, in order to give itself all pleasures. This time he has become epic, antique, and ingenuous, like Homer, and like the old *trouvères* of the *chansons de Geste*. It is pleasant to quit our learned civilisation, to rise again to the primitive age and manners, to listen to the peaceful discourse which flows copiously and slowly, as a river on a smooth slope. The mark of the ancient epic is clearness and calm. The ideas were new-born; man was happy and in his infancy. He had not had time to refine, to cut down and adorn his thoughts; he showed them bare. He was not yet pricked by manifold lusts; he thought at leisure. Every idea interested him; he unfolded it curiously, and explained it. His speech never jerks; he goes step by step, from one object to another, and every object seems lovely to him; he pauses,

[1] *The Princess*, a Medley, v. 165.

observes, and takes pleasure in observing. This simplicity and peace are strange and charming; we abandon ourselves, it is well with us; we do not desire to go more quickly; we fancy we would gladly remain thus, and for ever. For primitive thought is wholesome thought; we have but marred it by grafting and cultivation; we return to it as our familiar element, to find contentment and repose.

But of all epics, this of the Round Table is distinguished by purity. Arthur, the irreproachable king, has assembled

> 'A glorious company, the flower of men,
> To serve as model for the mighty world,
> And be the fair beginning of a time.
> I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
> To reverence the King, as if he were
> Their conscience, and their conscience as their King, . . .
> To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
> To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds.'[1]

There is a sort of refined pleasure in having to do with such a world; for there is none in which purer or more touching fruits could grow. I will show one—'Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat'—who, having seen Lancelot once, loves him when he has departed, and for her whole life. She keeps the shield, which he has left, in a tower, and every day goes up to contemplate it, counting 'every dint a sword had beaten in it, and every scratch a lance had made upon it,' and living on her dreams. He is wounded: she goes to tend and heal him:

> 'She murmur'd, "vain, in vain: it cannot be.
> He will not love me: how then? must I die?"
> Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
> That has but one plain passage of few notes,
> Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
> For all an April morning, till the ear
> Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
> Went half the night repeating, "must I die?"'[2]

At last she confesses her secret; but with what modesty and spirit! He cannot marry her; he is tied to another. She droops and fades; her father and brothers try to console her, but she will not be consoled. She is told that Lancelot has sinned with the queen; she does not believe it:

> 'At last she said, "Sweet brothers, yester night
> I seem'd a curious little maid again,
> As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
> And when you used to take me with the flood
> Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
> Only you would not pass beyond the cape

[1] *Idylls of the King*, 1864; *Guinevere*, 249. [2] *Ibid.*; *Elaine*, 193.

That has the poplar on it; there you fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because you would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the king.
. . . Now shall I have my will."'[1]

She dies, and her father and brothers did what she had asked:

'But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her:
"Sister, farewell for ever," and again
"Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead
Steer'd by the dumb went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.'[2]

Thus they arrive at Court in great silence, and King Arthur read the letter before all his knights and weeping ladies:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan.
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless.'[3]

Nothing more: she ends with this word, full of so sad a regret and so

[1] *Idylls of the King; Elaine*, 201. [2] *Ibid.* 206. [3] *Ibid.* 213.

tender an admiration: we could hardly find anything more simple or more delicate.

It seems as if an archæologist might reproduce all styles except the grand, and Tennyson has reproduced all, even the grand. It is the night of the final battle; all day the tumult of the mighty fray 'roll'd among the mountains by the winter sea;' Arthur's knights had fallen 'man by man;' he himself had fallen, 'deeply smitten through the helm,' and Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights, bore him to a place hard by,

> 'A chapel nigh the field,
> A broken chancel with a broken cross,
> That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
> On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
> Lay a great water, and the moon was full.'[1]

Arthur, feeling himself about to die, bids him take his sword Excalibur 'and fling him far into the middle meer;' for he had received it from the sea-nymphs, and after him no mortal must handle it. Twice Sir Bedivere went to obey the king: twice he paused, and came back pretending that he had flung away the sword; for his eyes were dazzled by the wondrous diamond setting which clustered and shone about the haft. The third time he throws it:

> 'The great brand
> Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
> And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
> Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
> Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
> By night, with noises of the northern sea.
> So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
> But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
> Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
> And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
> Three times, and drew him under in the meer.'[2]

Then Arthur, rising painfully, and scarce able to breathe, bids Sir Bedivere take him on his shoulders and 'bear me to the margin.' 'Quick, quick! I fear it is too late, and I shall die.' They arrive thus, through 'icy caves and barren chasms,' to the shores of a lake, where they saw 'the long glories of the winter moon:'

> 'They saw then how there hove a dusky barge
> Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
> Beneath them; and descending they were ware
> That all the decks were dense with stately forms
> Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
> Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
> A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
> And, as it were one voice, an agony
> Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills

[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Morte d'Arthur*, 189. [2] *Ibid.* 194.

All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur: "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud. . . .'[1]

Before the barge drifts away, King Arthur, raising his slow voice, consoles Sir Bedivere, standing in sorrow on the shore, and pronounces this heroic and solemn farewell:

'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. . . .
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. . . .
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seëst,—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'[2]

Nothing, I think, calmer and more imposing has been seen since Goethe.

How, in a few words, shall we assemble all the features of so manifold a talent? Tennyson is a born poet, that is, a builder of airy palaces and imaginary castles. But the individual passion and absorbing preoccupations which generally guide the hands of such men are wanting to him; he found in himself no plan of a new edifice; he has built after all the rest; he has simply chosen amongst all forms the most elegant, ornate, exquisite. Of their beauties he has taken but the flower. At most, now and then, he has here and there amused himself by designing some genuinely English and modern cottage. If in this choice of architecture, adopted or restored, we look for a trace of him, we shall find it, here and there, in some more finely sculptured frieze, in some more delicate and graceful sculptured rose-work; but we shall only find it marked and sensible in the purity and elevation of the moral emotion which we shall carry away with us when we quit his gallery of art.

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[1] Poems by A. Tennyson, 7th ed. 1851; *Morte d'Arthur*, 196. [2] *Ibid.* 197.

VI.

The favourite poet of a nation, it seems, is he whose works a man, setting out on a journey, prefers to put into his pocket. Now-a-days it would be Tennyson in England, and Alfred de Musset in France. The two publics differ: so do their modes of life, their reading, and their pleasures. Let us try to describe them; we shall better understand the flowers if we see them in the garden.

Here we are at Newhaven or at Dover, and we glide over the rails looking on either side. On both hands fly past country-houses; they exist everywhere in England, on the margin of lakes, on the edge of the bays, on the summit of the hill, in every picturesque point of view. They are the chosen abodes; London is but a business-place; men of the world live, amuse themselves, visit each other, in the country. How well ordered and pretty is this house! If near it there was some old edifice, abbey, or castle, it has been preserved. The new building has been suited to the old; even if detached and modern, it does not lack style; gable-ends, mullions, broad-windows, turrets perched at every corner, have a Gothic air in their newness. Even this cottage, modest as it is, suited to people, with a very good income, is pleasant to see with its pointed roofs, its porch, its bright brown bricks, all covered with ivy. Doubtless grandeur is generally wanting; in these days the men who mould opinion are no longer great lords, but rich gentlemen, well brought up, and landholders; it is pleasantness which appeals to them. But how they understand the word! All round the house is a lawn fresh and smooth as velvet, rolled every morning. In front, great rhododendrons form a bright thicket in which murmur swarms of bees; festoons of exotics creep and curve over the short grass; honeysuckles clamber up the trees; hundreds of roses, drooping over the windows, shed their rain of petals on the paths. Fine elms, yew-trees, great oaks, jealously tended, everywhere combine their leafage or rear their heads. Trees have been brought from Australia and China to adorn the thickets with the elegance or the singularity of their foreign shapes; the copper-beech stretches over the delicate verdure the shadow of its dark metallic-hued foliage. How delicious is the freshness of this verdure! How it glistens, and how it abounds in wild flowers brightened by the sun! What care, what cleanliness, how everything is arranged, kept up, refined, for the comfort of the senses and the pleasure of the eyes! If there is a slope, streams have been devised with little islets in the glen, peopled with tufts of roses; ducks of select breed swim in the pools, where the water-lilies display their satin stars. Fat oxen lie in the grass, sheep as white as if fresh from the washing, all kinds of happy and model animals, fit to delight the eyes of an amateur and a master. We return to the house, and before entering I look upon the view; decidedly the love of Englishmen for the country is innate; how comfortable it will be from that parlour

window to look upon the setting sun, and the broad network of sunlight spread across the woods! And how cunningly they have disposed the house, so that the landscape may be seen at distance between the hills, and at hand between the trees! We enter. How nicely everything is got up, and how commodious! The least wants have been foreseen, provided for; there is nothing which is not correct and perfect; we imagine that all the objects have received a prize, or at least honourable mention, at some industrial exhibition. And the attendance of the servants is as good as the objects; cleanliness is not more scrupulous in Holland; Englishmen have, in proportion, three times as many servants as Frenchmen; not too many for the minute details of the service. The domestic machine acts without interruption, without shock, without hindrance; every wheel has its movement and its place, and the comfort which it dispenses falls on the mouth like honeydew, as true and as exquisite as the sugar of a model refinery when quite purified.

We converse with our host. We very soon find that his mind and soul have always been well balanced. When he left college he found his career shaped out for him; no need for him to revolt against the Church, which is half rational; nor against the Constitution, which is nobly liberal: the faith and law presented to him are good, useful, moral, liberal enough to maintain and employ all diversities of sincere minds. He became attached to them, he loves them, he has received from them the whole system of his practical and speculative ideas; he does not waver, he no longer doubts, he knows what he ought to believe and to do. He is not carried away by theories, dulled by sloth, checked by contradictions. Elsewhere youth is like a stagnant or scattering water; here there is a fine old channel which receives and directs to a useful and sure end the stream of its activities and passions. He acts, works, rules. He is married, has tenants, is a magistrate, becomes a politician. He improves and rules his parish, his estate, and his family. He founds societies, speaks at meetings, superintends schools, dispenses justice, introduces improvements; he employs his reading, his travels, his connections, his fortune, and his rank, to lead his neighbours and dependants amicably to some work which profits themselves and the public. He is influential and respected. He has the pleasures of self-esteem and the satisfaction of conscience. He knows that he has authority, and that he uses it loyally, for the good of others. And this healthy state of mind is supported by a wholesome life. His mind is beyond doubt cultivated and occupied; he is well-informed, knows several languages, has travelled, is fond of all precise information; he is kept by his newspaper conversant with all new ideas and discoveries. But, at the same time, he loves and practises all bodily exercises. He rides, takes long walks, hunts, yachts, follows closely and by himself all the details of breeding and agriculture; he lives in the open air, he withstands the encroachments of a sedentary life, which always elsewhere leads the modern man to agitation of the brain, weakness

of the muscles, and excitement of the nerves. Such is this elegant and common-sense society, refined in comfort, regular in conduct, whose dilettante tastes and moral principles confine it within a sort of flowery border, and prevent it from having its attention diverted.

Does any poet suit such a society better than Tennyson? Without being a pedant, he is moral; he may be read in the family circle by night; he does not rebel against society and life; he speaks of God and the soul, nobly, tenderly, without ecclesiastical prejudice; there is no need to reproach him like Lord Byron; he has no violent and abrupt words, excessive and scandalous sentiments; he will pervert nobody. We shall not be troubled when we close the book; we may listen when we quit him, without contrast, to the grave voice of the master of the house, who repeats the evening prayers before the kneeling servants. And yet, when we quit him, we keep a smile of pleasure on our lips. The traveller, the lover of archæology, has been pleased by the imitations of foreign and antique sentiments. The sportsman, the lover of the country, has relished the little country scenes and the rich rural pictures. The ladies have been charmed by his portraits of women; they are so exquisite and pure! He has laid such delicate blushes on those lovely cheeks! He has depicted so well the changing expression of those proud or candid eyes! They like him because they feel that he likes them. More, he honours them, and rises in his nobility to the height of their purity. Young girls weep in listening to him; certainly when, a while ago, we heard the legend of *Elaine* or *Enid* read, we saw the fair heads drooping under the flowers which adorned them, and white shoulders heaving with furtive emotion. And how delicate was this emotion! He has not rudely trenched upon truth and passion. He has risen to the height of noble and tender sentiments. He has gleaned from all nature and all history what was most lofty and amiable. He has chosen his ideas, chiselled his words, equalled by his artifices, successes, and diversity of his style, the pleasantness and perfection of social elegance in the midst of which we read him. His poetry is like one of those gilt and painted stands in which flowers of the country and exotics mingle in artful harmony their stalks and foliage, their clusters and cups, their scents and hues. It seems made expressly for these wealthy, cultivated, free business men, heirs of the ancient nobility, new leaders of a new England. It is part of their luxury as of their morality; it is an eloquent confirmation of their principles, and a precious article of their drawing-room furniture.

We return to Calais, and travel towards Paris, without pausing on the road. There are on the way plenty of noblemen's castles, and houses of rich men of business. But we do not find amongst them, as in England, the thinking elegant world, which, by the refinement of its tastes and the superiority of its mind, becomes the guide of the nation and the arbiter of the beautiful. There are two peoples in France: the

provinces and Paris; the one dining, sleeping, yawning, listening; the other thinking, daring, watching, and speaking: the first drawn by the second, as a snail by a butterfly, alternately amused and disturbed by the whims and the audacity of its guide. It is this guide we must look upon! Let us enter Paris! What a strange spectacle! It is evening, the streets are aflame, a luminous dust covers the busy noisy crowd, which jostles, elbows, crushes, and swarms in front of the theatres, behind the windows of the cafés. Have you remarked how all these faces are wrinkled, frowning, or pale; how anxious are their looks, how nervous their gestures? A violent brightness falls on these shining heads; most are bald before thirty. To find pleasure here, they must have plenty of excitement: the dust of the boulevard settles on the ice which they are eating; the smell of the gas and the steam of the pavement, the perspiration left on the walls dried up by the fever of a Parisian day, 'the human air full of impure rattle'—this is what they cheerfully breathe. They are crammed round their little marble tables, persecuted by the glaring light, the shouts of the waiters, the jumble of mixed talk, the monotonous motion of gloomy walkers, the flutter of loitering courtesans moving anxiously in the shadow. Doubtless their homes are unpleasing, or they would not change them for these bagmen's delights. We climb four flights, and find ourselves in a polished, gilded room, adorned with stuccoed ornaments, plaster statuettes, new furniture of old oak, with every kind of pretty knick-knack on the mantlepieces and the whatnots. 'It makes a good show;' you can give a good reception to envious friends and people of standing. It is an advertisement, nothing more; we pass half an hour there agreeably, and that is all. You will never make more than a house of call out of it; it is low in the ceiling, close, inconvenient, rented by the year, dirty in six months, serving to display a fictitious luxury. All the enjoyments of these people are factitious, and, as it were, snatched hurriedly; they have in them something unhealthy and irritating. They are like the cookery of their restaurants, the splendour of their cafés, the gaiety of their theatres. They want them too quick, too lively, too manifold. They have not cultivated them patiently, and culled them moderately; they have forced them on an artificial and heating soil; they grasp them in haste. They are refined and greedy; they need every day a stock of coloured words, broad anecdotes, biting railleries, new truths, varied ideas. They soon get bored, and cannot endure tedium. They amuse themselves with all their might, and find that they are hardly amused. They exaggerate their work and their expense, their wants and their efforts. The accumulation of sensations and fatigue stretches their nervous machine to excess, and their polish of social gaiety chips off twenty times a day, displaying a basis of suffering and ardour.

But how fine they are, and how free is their mind! How this incessant rubbing has sharpened them! How ready they are to grasp

and comprehend everything! How apt this studied and manifold culture has made them to feel and relish tendernesses and sadnesses, unknown to their fathers, deep feelings, strange and sublime, which hitherto seemed foreign to their race! This great city is cosmopolitan; here all ideas may be born; no barrier checks the mind; the vast field of thought opens before them without a beaten or prescribed track. Use neither hinders nor guides them; an official Government and Church rid them of the care of leading the nation: the two powers are submitted to, as we submit to the beadle or the policeman, patiently and with chaff; they are looked upon as a play. In short, the world here seems but a melodrama, a subject of criticism and argument. And be sure that criticism and argument have full scope. An Englishman entering on life, finds to all great questions an answer ready made. A Frenchman entering on life finds to all great questions simply suggested doubts. In this conflict of opinions he must create a faith for himself, and, being mostly unable to do it, he remains open to every uncertainty, and therefore to every curiosity and to every pain. In this gulf, which is like a vast sea, dreams, theories, fancies, intemperate, poetic and sickly desires, collect and chase each other like clouds. If in this tumult of moving forms we seek some solid work to prepare a foundation for future opinions, we find only the slowly-rising edifices of the sciences, which here and there obscurely, like submarine polypes, construct of imperceptible coral the basis on which the belief of the human race is to rest.

Such is the world for which Alfred de Musset wrote: in Paris he must be read. Read? We all know him by heart. He is dead, and it seems as if we daily hear him speak. A conversation among artists, as they jest in a studio, a beautiful young girl leaning over her box at the theatre, a street washed by the rain, making the black pavement shine, a fresh smiling morning in the woods of Fontainebleau, everything brings him before us, as if he were alive again. Was there ever a more vibrating and genuine accent? This man, at least, has never lied. He has only said what he felt, and he has said it, as he felt it. He thought aloud. He made the confession of every man. He was not admired, but loved; he was more than a poet, he was a man. Every one found in him his own feelings, the most transient, the most familiar; he did not restrain himself, he gave himself to all; he had the last virtues which remain to us, generosity and sincerity. And he had the most precious gift which can seduce an old civilisation, youth. As he said, 'that hot youth, a tree with a rough bark, which covers all with its shadow, prospect and path.' With what fire did he hurl onward love, jealousy, the thirst of pleasure, all the impetuous passions which rise with virgin blood from the depths of a young heart, and how did he make them clash together! Has any one felt them more deeply? He was too full of them, he gave himself up to them, was intoxicated with them. He rushed through life, like an eager racehorse in the

country, whom the scent of plants and the splendid novelty of the vast heavens urge, breast foremost, in its mad career, which shatters all before him, and himself as well. He desired too much; he wished strongly and greedily to taste life in one draught, thoroughly; he did not glean or taste it; he tore it off like a bunch of grapes, pressed it, crushed it, twisted it; and he remains with stained hands, as thirsty as before.[1] Then broke forth sobs which found an echo in all hearts. What! so young, and already so wearied! So many precious gifts, so fine a mind, so delicate a tact, so rich and mobile a fancy, so precocious a glory, such a sudden blossom of beauty and genius, and yet anguish, disgust, tears, and cries! What a mixture! With the same attitude he adores and curses. Eternal illusion, invincible experience, keep side by side in him to fight and tear him. He became old, and remained young; he is a poet, and he is a sceptic. The Muse and her peaceful beauty, Nature and her immortal freshness, Love and his happy smile, all the swarm of divine visions barely passed before his eyes, when we see approaching, with curses and sarcasms, all the spectres of debauchery and death. He is as a man in a festive scene, who drinks from a carven cup, standing up, in front, amidst applause and triumphal music, his eyes laughing, his heart full of joy, heated and excited by the generous wine descending in his breast, whom suddenly we see growing pale; there was poison in the cup; he falls, and the death-rattle is in his throat; his convulsed feet beat upon the silken carpet, and all the terrified guests look on. This is what we felt on the day when the most beloved, the most brilliant amongst us, suddenly quivered from an unseen attack, and was struck down, with the death-rattle in his throat, amid the lying splendours and gaieties of our banquet.

Well! such as he was, we love him for ever: we cannot listen to another; beside him, all seem cold or false. We leave at midnight the theatre in which he had heard Malibran, and we enter the gloomy *rue des Moulins*, where, on a hired bed, his Rolla[2] came to sleep and die. The lamps cast flickering rays on the slippery pavement. Restless shadows march past the doors, and trail along their dress of draggled silk to meet the passers-by. The windows are fastened; here and there a light pierces through a half-closed shutter, and shows a dead dahlia on the edge of a window-sill. To-morrow an organ will grind before these panes, and the wan clouds will leave their droppings on these dirty walls. From this wretched place came the most impassioned of his poems! These vilenesses and vulgarities of the stews and the lodging-house caused this divine eloquence to flow! it was

[1] 'O médiocrité! celui qui pour tout bien
T'apporte à ce tripot dégoûtant de la vie
Est bien poltron au jeu s'il ne dit: Tout ou rien.'

[2] See vol. i. p. 237, n. 1.

these which at such a moment gathered in this bruised heart all the splendours of nature and history, to make them spring up in sparkling jets, and shine under the most glowing poetic sun that ever rose! We feel pity; we think of that other poet, away there in the Isle of Wight, who amuses himself by dressing up lost epics. How happy he is amongst his fine books, his friends, his honeysuckles and roses! No matter. De Musset, in this very spot, in this filth and misery, rose higher. From the heights of his doubt and despair, he saw the infinite, as we see the sea from a storm-beaten promontory. Religions, their glory and their decay, the human race, its pangs and its destiny, all that is sublime in the world, appeared there to him in a flash of lightning. He felt, at least this once in his life, the inner tempest of deep sensations, giant-dreams, and intense voluptuousness, whose desire enabled him to live, and whose lack forced him to die. He was no mere dilettante; he was not content to taste and enjoy; he left his mark on human thought; he told the world what was man, love, truth, happiness. He suffered, but he invented; he fainted, but he produced. He tore from his entrails with despair the idea which he had conceived, and showed it to the eyes of all, bloody but alive. That is harder and lovelier than to go fondling and gazing upon the ideas of others. There is in the world but one work worthy of a man, the production of a truth, to which we devote ourselves, and in which we believe. The people who have listened to Tennyson are better than our aristocracy of townsfolk and bohemians; but I prefer Alfred de Musset to Tennyson.

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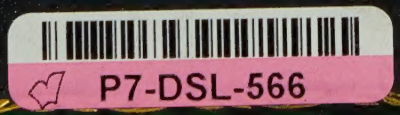
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